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MONTY PYTHON • STONES & WHO ON TAPE!

VID-KID OF THE MONTH
TODD RUNDGREN

DAN AYKROYD IS A VID-KID!

Come to think of it, maybe he's a Vid-*Man!* And why shouldn't he be? After all, super-celeb Aykroyd spends his spare time *saving the Planet Earth* when he's not busy filling theatre seats with fans of such hot flicks as *Doctor Detroit* and *Moochie Must Die Vs. Donald Eats A Clam!!* ''Your magazine is *wretched,*'' jokes zany Dan, ''Filled with feeble humor that I find repugnant. After this game of Space Duel, I will *destroy* you *all!*'' Sometimes Dan's glasses are too heavy, explain concerned parents!

photo by John Bellissimo/Retna

VIDIOT™

VOL. 1, NO. 5

AUG/SEPT 1983

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VIDIOT

TM

Upfront

We'd appreciate it if readers could take the time to write and tell us what they think of this issue.

Vidgame fans might be slightly disappointed in the direction we seem to be heading—Monty Python? Video Art? Museums? What's *that* stuff doing in a magazine with Q*Bert on the cover?, some of you may be asking. If so, we understand.

Fact is, there's something else up there on the cover right next to Q*Bert, Popeye and Baby Pac, and that's the words THE MAGAZINE OF VIDEO LUNACY. They're important words, probably *the* most important words about VIDIOT, because they don't limit us in ways other magazines are limited. They give us leeway. We're taking a gamble, frankly, that if you're the type of person who enjoys *any* of the unlikelier aspects of video—from vidgames and television shows to rock videos and even the music of the vidgames themselves—you'll find something you enjoy in VIDIOT.

You'll get a kick out of M.T. Boxx's article rating the other video magazines in this issue, and if you have the obvious question on your mind—like how come he didn't rate VIDIOT?—it's because we didn't think he needed to. You're holding it in your hands right now, and the fact is, everyone here *knows* his opinion. We just need to know *yours*.

So you tell us. Epcot Center, Arcade Action, Monty Python, Video Art, Hardware/Software. Interesting? Boring? Would you rather see more vidgames reviewed? Less? More TV shows? We're ready to do whatever you want—and if you can help us by letting us know what you *do* want, great.

So when you get to VIDIOT MAIL, there's an address up there. Ours. You figure out the rest.

Dave DiMartino

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SORRY, ATARI!

I was really interested reading your article about Atari's financial woes. Poor Atari, controlling only 56 percent of the home videogame market. I feel real sorry for 'em. (Like boo hoo). Several months ago, I sold my Atari 2600 and bought a ColecoVision console. It's great—and with the Atari adaptor, I still buy an occasional 2600 cartridge, like Raiders Of The Lost Ark and Centipede, but find myself disappointed by the low res graphics compared to ColecoVision.

If Atari wants to control more of the market, why don't they start making versions of their great arcade licenses, like Dig Dug and Battlezone for the two other main videogames systems, Intellivision and ColecoVision? That way, they'd have the best of both worlds, making more profits from their own game consoles and the other two as well, instead of complaining of profit losses, with their arrogant nose in the air, with all this "we are superior" crap.

With the new Coleco Super Game Module coming out soon, Atari, if it makes cartridges for this system, could make some of the best arcade-to-home translations in its history. I hope Atari is considering this. If not, Coleco may one day rule the home videogame roost, while Atari is left in the dust, to wallow in their own self-conceit.

Jeff Silva
Tacoma, WA

POINTED

If you ask me, it's about time somebody put out a video magazine that covers the games intelligently. That's all.

The Joystick Kid
Fremont, NC

POCKET LOGIC

I thought Rick Johnson's article about joysticks was right on! All this accessories silliness just kills me to little itty bitty teeny tiny pieces. It's ridiculous! Stupid! And, worst of all, it's expensive!

Keep on telling it like it is.

Brian Giles
New York, NY

DOUBTING LEON

Did you guys *really* try out all the joysticks you said you did? Or did you just try out the six you wrote about? I can't decide whether to be disgruntled or not.

Leon Oester
Hebron, IN

Yes.—Ed.

THANK YOU

I'd like to commend you for covering joystick accessories for the handicapped. It's an idea whose time has definitely come.

Chris Washington, M.D.
Miami, FL

Vidiot Mail™

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NORTON A "NERD"?

What does Mark J. NERD-ton know about videogame protocol? If he tried any of the moves he writes about in *MY* arcade, he'd be laughed out into the street! If anyone ever came up to me and even said "Tickets to see GOD are on sale," I wouldn't leave *my* Centipede game. What a useless waste of space.

Christopher A. Green
Cass, MI

There are many ways to waste space.—Ed.

HATE!

I really enjoyed J. Kordosh's article on video how-to books. In fact, I enjoyed the article more than the books. But one thing: I can't find the "I Hate Videogames" book. Can you tell me where I can find this, so I can start hating videogames too? My allowance is really starting to suffer, and I want to save up enough money to buy a baseball mitt. Thank you.

Matthew F. Burgess
Ontario, Canada

Kordosh suggests you "try a bookstore."—Ed.

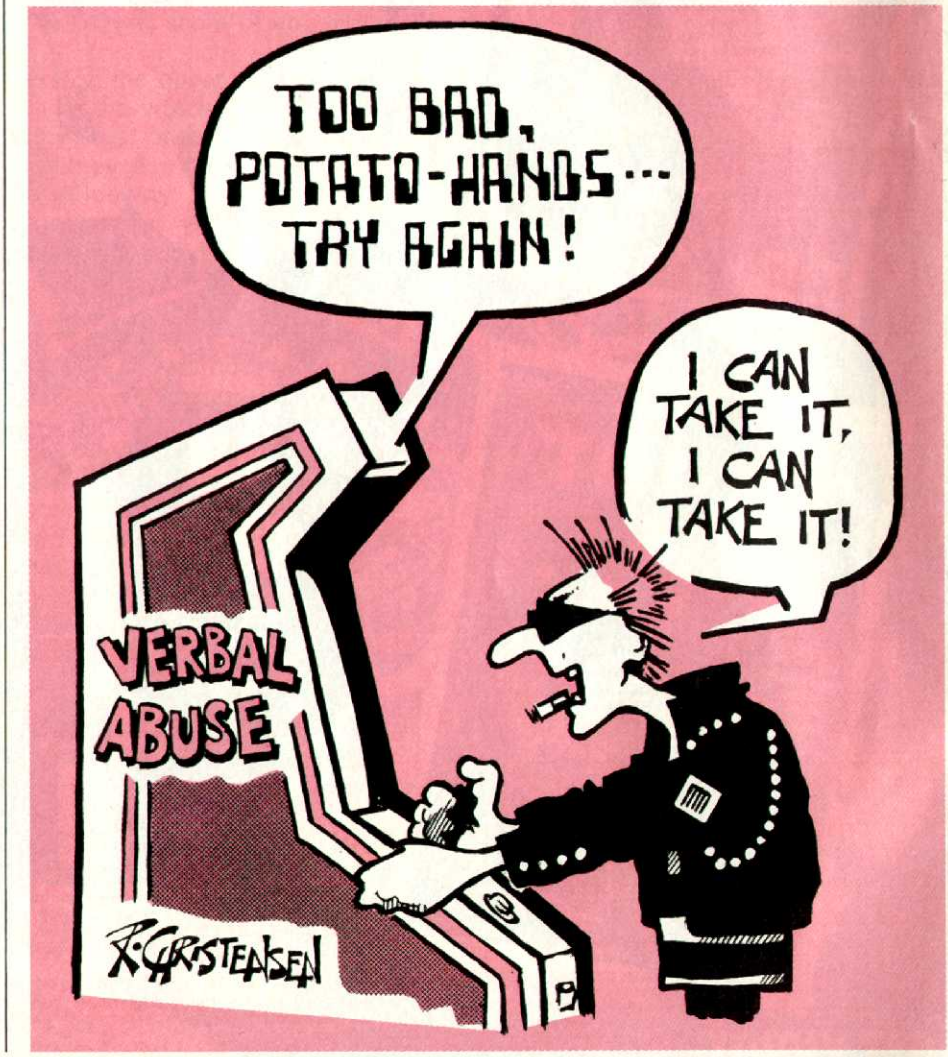
MAMMY!

I really appreciated Toby Goldstein's article on Dick Clark. After so many years in the biz, we all seem to take Clark for granted. And, granted that I may not watch *American Bandstand* anymore (all those young girls make me ill), it gives me a nice feeling to know that my daughter can enjoy a contemporary show as much as I did 20 years ago.

Mrs. Amanda Modell
Lexington, KY

TYPICAL READER?

I am 30 years old, and I really enjoy your magazine. You seem to cover all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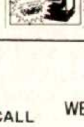

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aspects of "video lunacy" from those crazy arcade games all the way to the newest technology in stereos and such. Keep up the good work.

I even got a kick out of "Bit By The Vid Buzz" and "Arcade Dos And Don'ts."

Sammy-Bam-Whammy
Rockford, IL

OPINIONS!

I like your poster in the April/May issue of the Magazine of Video Lunacy, VIDIOT (the Beatles). And here's my opinion of Burgertime Flame Broiling vs. Frying, and Donkey Kong Jr.: *HELP!*

Here's my opinion of Super Pac—it doesn't look like he's so super.

Here's some good opinions: Galaga—excellent; Satan's Hollow—exciting, realistic.

I'd like to ask you a question: where can you get good Atari cartridges from Lindenhurst through Babylon? One more thing, can you give me some tips on Zaxxon and Pac-Man? Please send me a letter from you.

Michael Ferrara
Lindenhurst, NY

Sorry. We can't get through Babylon.—Ed.

DUMB GAMES!

As I was reading your magazine, I noticed something about that dumb Journey Escape video game by Data Age. The object of that game is really stupid, so I was thinking about rock videogames. They should make one for the Who. How many guitars can you smash in eight minutes?

Gideon Greenberg
New York, NY

P.S. I heard Pac-Man was moving to the Midwest. Good, get rid of the bum! Maybe he could take his wife and baby with him!

GOOD MIX

I am an avid heavy metal and videogame fan. I own a ColecoVision, and a Pioneer stereo, so I play Zaxxon to the music of Van Halen, Donkey Kong to the Scorpions and Venture to Ozzy Osbourne. I really enjoy the mixture of rock and videogames in your magazine. Keep up the good work, and how about one every month instead of every other month?

Jeff Hendershot
Hyattsville, MD

NO ROCK!

I think that your magazine is great, but your Rock Vidiocy sucks! I think you should have one issue just on videogames. Also, why don't they have videogames with Chomp-Chomp and Sourpuss, because they're a part of the Pac-Man family on the Pac-Man cartoon. They have Pac-Man, Mrs. Pac-Man, Baby Pac-Man, Super Pac-Man, Pac-Man plus and Pac-Man mania games, so why not Chomp-Chomp and Sourpuss?

Brian Spoo
Deer Park, WI

Spoo?—Ed.

PINBALL WHIZ!

I like '60s pinball games, they're more fun. I hate videogames. The only reason I bought your magazine was for the Beatles article. That issue was probably a big seller. I like to go to Roseland Park Amusement Park because they're the only ones who haven't bought any of those videogames. They have all those cool pinball machines and gun ranges. Old pinball machines don't burn you out like all the new videogames.

I don't like all that E.T. junk either (extra trash). Who needs an ugly piece of rubber for a hero? Whatever happened to Batman and Superman? All this E.T. crap makes me sick. I like cool heroes like Spock, yeah. There are some cool teens like me who haven't been brainwashed by all this garbage. Well, that's all you wanted to know how I feel about all this junk, I hope you understand how I feel.

Jim Havalack
Rochester, NY

MOTIVATION

What exactly are you guys trying to do with your magazine? One issue looks like a comic book—no, not one of 'em, *all* of 'em, except for maybe that Beatles cover you had a few issues back. I get the feeling that you're sort of floundering around, trying to cover more bases than you really can. I'm sure there may be an audience that enjoys rock music *and* videogames, just as there is an audience that enjoys rock music and home video in general—you know, videodiscs, cassettes, the whole thing. Only problem, as far as I can see, is that you're missing the boat in attracting any sort of serious "adult" readership to your mag simply because, let's face it, it looks like a *kiddie mag* and no one my age would be caught dead walking out of the campus bookstore with it.

How can you change it? Well, maybe get a little classier looking. Get glossy, get thicker—yeah, I know that means more ads, but face it guys, I haven't seen any ads in your book for *how* many months now? Look a little more high tech. I guarantee, kids these days are so into computers they look *down* on comic book antics like your *Star Wars* versus *Star Trek* hoo-hah—they'd rather see a computer console and shiny new hardware. If you ask me, the audience you look like you're aiming for can't even afford a *comic book*, let alone $2.95. Their parents don't think they're old enough to get an allowance yet.

Either grow up—become a slick, hi-tech book that even moms and dads would enjoy looking at—or grow *down*, stop covering anything but the simplest of videogames, and maybe leave a few pages black and white so your readers can color them in.

Sheesh. You guys at magazines must think we're *morons* out here.

Gary Hirsch
North Miami Beach, FL

KCA
I AM BLIND AND MY DOG IS HOOKED ON ASTEROIDS
R. CHRISTENSEN

OLYMPIA

I just wanted to thank VIDIOT for having the Videolympics at Cobo Hall in April. I had a really good time, even if I didn't win anything. I also think that the girls who worked behind the registering counter were cute. Where can I get ahold of them?

Robert Rakaski
Royal Oak, MI

It's all "behind" you now.—Ed.

NO GO!

Your magazine sucks! At first I thought it would be cool, with Darth Vader on the cover and all, but then I look inside. Four boring pages of Hardware/Software. Boring letters Boring VIDIOT news. What a stupid magazine. From now on, I'm going to buy *Blip*.

Joseph P. Black
Brooklyn, NY

JUST WAIT!

I have one question for you guys: why do you try to make another CREEM out of VIDIOT? Just to make more money? What you need to do is get different writers, people who know more about computers than they do about rock. When you decide to do that, let me know. I grew up with computers, as I went to a school for advanced kids. I'm only 17, but I'll write some *good* articles for your rag. I'll be waiting.

Patrick Richards
Miami, FL

VIDEO, SPAGHETTI LINKED!

BEVERLY HILLS—The First Annual American Video Awards were presented in early April, striking the off-key video equivalent of the ever-irrelevant Grammys.

Representatives of various music and video publications voted on the winners, honored for "outstanding" videos for 1982 records that reached the trade papers' Top 10. Rod Stewart's "Young Turks" was named Best Video, and the Motels' "Only The Lonely" received awards as Best Performance (tied with Peter Wolf's "Centerfold") and Best Director (Russell Mulcahy).

Other winners included Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder's "Ebony and Ivory" (Best Soul), Merle Haggard's "Are The Good Times Really Over?" (Best Country) and Fleetwood Mac's "Gypsy" ("special merit" recognition after failing to make the Top 10).

One celebrity showed the general enthusiasm present. Grace Slick remarked that "videos are the best thing since spaghetti."

Ron Galella

The thought begins to dawn in Grace Slick's burned-out brain: *Toni Basil...SHE'S ALIVE!*

SEX BANNED?

CHICAGO—If a new lobbying effort is successful, a third of the R-rated programming on cable television could vanish.

The targets of state legislatures, conservative cable subscribers and city councils are films that they interpret as obscene. In Arizona, California, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Dakota and Tennessee, bans on material "depicting nudity, sexual acts or violence with erotic overtones" have been enacted. However, industry insiders predict that court fights could last years.

Miami, Fla., recently passed an ordinance prohibiting "indecent" material from cable TV, but they've already been named in a lawsuit preventing the ban from taking effect. Last year, a federal court ruled that two Utah ordinances controlling cable programming violated the constitution. And the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) will file a suit against a Chicago suburb's cable restriction this month.

ACLU lawyer Burt Joseph told reporters that "I have yet to see (a cable censorship law) that is constitutional." It's possible that compromises like the Chicago city ordinance, which limits X-rated programs to the 11 p.m.-6 a.m. time, could soften the issue. However, in addition to the civil liberty/"community standards" conflict, the cable industry may be responding to the pressure by censoring itself.

"That's the most insidious part of these ordinances," Joseph added. "Cable companies will agree to anything for commercial reasons. They'd show only Protestant films if that would get a local franchise."

LOVE HURTS

DES MOINES, IOWA—Submitted for your approval: a gamester fired from her job because of love...of video.

Sharon Courtney, 23, lost her job at a Des Moines-area service station after refusing to stop playing the station's video game when gas-pumping got slow.

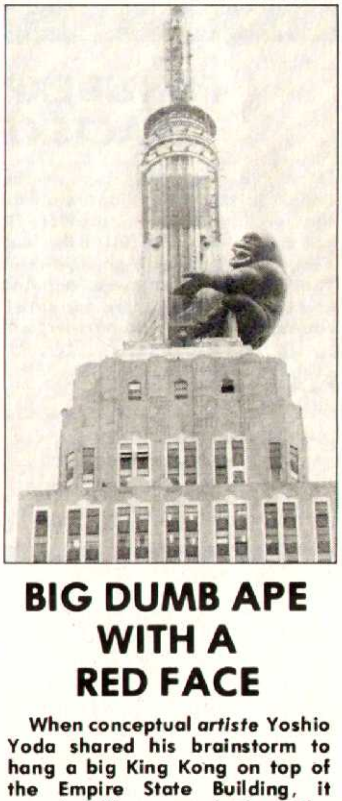
A spokeswoman for the state told *VIDIOT* that "the case was in a sort of twilight zone as far as her eligibility" for unemployment compensation.

So the signpost up ahead that Sharon saw read "No Benefits."

Gary Gershoff

AYKROYD GIVEN THE FINGER!

To promote the opening of his new movie *Doctor Detroit*, Dan Aykroyd went along with the promotional idea of a "Dan Aykroyd Look-Alike Contest." And boy, did he regret it! 'Cause when all the look-alikes were assembled, in walked the *I.R.S.!* When the government rep asked "OK you guys, who's the *real* Mr. Aykroyd?"... well you can see what happened. And was Dan mad! "Hey," he said, "I let you guys *plagiarize* me from conehead to Elwood Blues! I even let *one* of you win! (The guy in the bow-tie.) And you *finger* me with your gratitude! Well, fine!" said the huffy Canuck as he was led from the room. The party ended a few hours later when the two Slavs decided to swing down to Studio 54 in search of "foxes."



Vinnie Zuffante/Star File

BIG DUMB APE WITH A RED FACE

When conceptual *artiste* Yoshio Yoda shared his brainstorm to hang a big King Kong on top of the Empire State Building, it *sounded* like a good idea. The powers that be in NYC, being perpetually strapped for funds and all, figured hey, the tourists will love it and immediately run out and buy all five varieties of Empire State Building napkin rings, including the leopard skin model. But when the balloon was fixed in place high above the snoring crowd, all that was heard were howls of abusive laughter. Seems Yosh forgot Kong's *gym shorts*, causing the mortified ape balloon to be deployed in the position seen above. Once again, it wasn't beauty that killed the beast...

VIDIOT NEWS • VIDIOT NEWS

FONZIE EXPLAINS THE FACTS OF "LIFE"

"First thing, you gotta jam yer brass down the old slot," explained Fonzie to the always apprehensive dink, Richie Cunningham. "After that, well, you sorta *improvise*. Don't be afraid to shake it as hard as you can, my man," advised the leathered one. "*Shake it*, Fonz?" "Yeah, shake it with all you got. Don't be afraid of kicking the legs, either. That's what they're there for! And always remember how many balls you got and you'll score for sure!" "OK, Fonz," agreed the timid but cunning ham. "Now tomorrow, will you teach me how to play *pinball*?"

I, PING-PONG BALL

LIVONIA, MICHIGAN—It may not be a better mousetrap, but people are still beating a path to the Diamond J disco here.

Saker-One had a top-secret debut here last month, and it was pronounced a success by players and its maker, an aeronautical engineer.

The new video game is a step up from the standing or even sitting variations common to most arcades. In Saker-One, the player not only straps himself in, but rides the game unit into the air.

A column of air propels the "capsule" a few feet off its base, providing not only a simulation of space action, sight and sound, but the feel of flight too.

At $1 a minute, it *better* be popular. And apparently it is. One bartender at the Diamond J compared it to the Urban Cowboy-era mechanical bronco.

"There's no comparison," he laughed. "Maybe it's 'cause riders never got to blast the damned bull, and here the enemies can be killed. There was a line clear across the room."

Hmm. Maybe it *is* a trap.

SECRET AGENT MAN

LOS ANGELES—Actors have them; athletes have them. Even politicians have them. No, not Swiss bank accounts or deviant sexual tastes. Agents. And now the specialists who design games for video computers have them too.

One of the first and biggest agencies is Kaufman & Associates here, who've advised some of the whiz-kid wizards behind programs like Tempest and Missile Command.

"These people are creators, not businessmen," Malcolm Kaufman has said. "All I'm doing is taking elements of the film industry and applying them to the video and personal computer industry."

Kaufman & Associates have over 15 clients, but few of them have open foreign bank accounts. Sex is another story.

Chris Walter

PLAY TELEPHONE!

NEW YORK—Atari has more secrets than the Pentagon, and it's space-age product line may soon need a budget as big as the Defense Department's.

The company's hush-hush research and development gang is working on a variety of projects: touch-sensitive screens, a computer with a two-dimensional screen, wireless joysticks, fiber optic utilization, and an innovative 3-D game. But their "Atari-Tel" is expected to help improve the firm's financial future for 1984.

Atari-Tel, formerly code-named Project Falcon, will be a sophisticated telecommunications device slated to be commercially available next year.

"It's much more than a modem," one sales representative told *VIDIOT*. "It'll be part micro-computer and part telephone."

Users would be able to connect into their home heating/cooling systems, specific appliances, or "possibly even interface game systems and computers," via telephone lines.

Atari-Tel should be a welcome accessory to consumers interested in the convenience of tapping into Wall Street while turning off the toaster and playing a quick game of *Smurf Rescue At Gargamel's Castle*.

VERTICAL SCAN, MAN

WASHINGTON D.C.—The Federal Communications Commission has OK'd teletext experiments by broadcast TV stations beginning this year. Westinghouse, PBS and CBS have teletext plans on the drawing board, ranging from news items and stock market information to airline schedules and "classified" advertising. Teletext uses the "vertical scan" in ordinary TV transmission to reach homes equipped with the necessary decoders.

SOLD OUT!

It could only happen in America! If you checked out our letter section, you may have noticed a letter from a young man who wouldn't leave his Centipede game if "...tickets to see GOD were on sale!" And wouldja believe it? The members of the British reggae band Musical Youth were shocked, no—stunned, *nay, disbelieving* when a loud voice announced from within the game, "Tickets to see the Great Lord Almighty are now on sale!" Although a little nervous, the Youth quickly vacated the machine to see if they could wrangle their way into an opening spot for the biggest gig of the century!

VIDIOT NEWS • VIDIOT NEWS

ILLEGITIMATE SHORTCAKES?

HOLLYWOOD—After *being* the Turtles, singing back-up for Frank Zappa, and producing LPs by famous and infamous rock groups, what could Howard Kaylan and Mark Volman do next?

Switch *markets*, that's what.

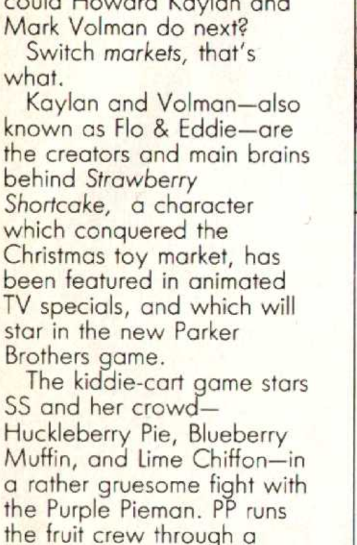
Kaylan and Volman—also known as Flo & Eddie—are the creators and main brains behind *Strawberry Shortcake*, a character which conquered the Christmas toy market, has been featured in animated TV specials, and which will star in the new Parker Brothers game.

The kiddie-cart game stars SS and her crowd—Huckleberry Pie, Blueberry Muffin, and Lime Chiffon—in a rather gruesome fight with the Purple Pieman. PP runs the fruit crew through a glorified food processor which scatters their components throughout the game world. Players must reassemble the good guys to win.

But be careful, Flo-fans and Eddie-heads! Don't mix up the folks, or you'll lose points (and who'd *want* a Gooseberry Tart?).

The *real* Strawberry and Blueberry Shortcake!

Larry Kaplan



FAMOUS RAT GETS WARTS!

"Rats!" says the ShowBiz Cheeser Chuck E. "Whoever heard of a crafty rodent being beat out by an amphibian of little aptitude?!" Not us, Chuck. But why do you keep playing with Froggie? "Because the best part is the squishy noise he makes when I let him get squashed in traffic!" Goodness, Chuck! What's next? "See that little kid? Well, I'm gonna take my tail and..." Goodness!"

CABLE CUTS

WASHINGTON, D.C.—When everybody was watching the "cable explosion," somebody crept up and hosed down the fire.

In mid-March, over six million cable subscribers lost one or more channels, usually either New York's WOR-TV, Chicago's WGN-TV or Atlanta's WTBS-TV.

The cuts came as a result of a ruling by a U.S. Court of Appeals, which denied a request by the National Cable Television Association to halt sizable hikes in copyright fees.

The copyright fee increases were ordered by the Federal Copyright Royalty Tribunal last fall. The fees must be paid by local cable operators in exchange for the right to retransmit and resell the signals of independent stations located outside their cities. Copyright revenues are then divided among producers, sports interests and broadcasters.

Cable companies face an increase of up to 600% for some major markets, based on 3.75% of basic subscriber revenue. Many cable firms began to offer more "distant signal" stations like WOR and TBS after the FCC in 1981 stopped limiting the number of super-stations a company could bring in.

"What's really unfair is that it even covers their subscribers who have descramblers to receive...a particular station," commented one spokesman from General Electric Cablevision, a Schenectady, NY, headquartered network of 13 cable systems. "Instead of charging fees based on participating cable viewers, they'll charge us for *all* our subscribers."

On the other side of the argument, Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, told reporters that "the cable industry has been yelling out of sheer greed—because they've been getting a free ride for so long."

Ironically, the restriction on distant signal stations may be a boon to other non-telecast cable services like ESPN and MTV. Since those services are covered by different fees, it will be less expensive for a cable operator to offer them than super-stations.

So the cable explosion may ignite again, but it may be service-oriented rather than station-oriented.

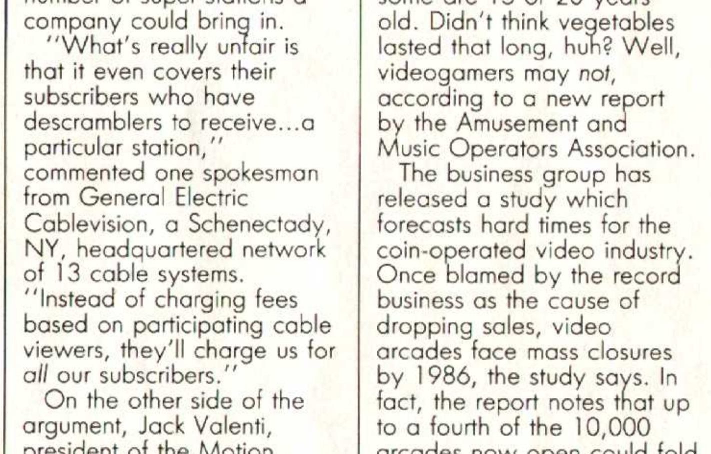
VIDEOGAMERS ENDANGERED

NEW YORK—They stand stiffly in front of bright lights; some are 15 or 20 years old. Didn't think vegetables lasted that long, huh? Well, videogamers may *not*, according to a new report by the Amusement and Music Operators Association.

The business group has released a study which forecasts hard times for the coin-operated video industry. Once blamed by the record business as the cause of dropping sales, video arcades face mass closures by 1986, the study says. In fact, the report notes that up to a fourth of the 10,000 arcades now open could fold by then.

Factors mentioned as having adverse effects on the arcade business is home video and improved movie theatre traffic.

Ross Marino



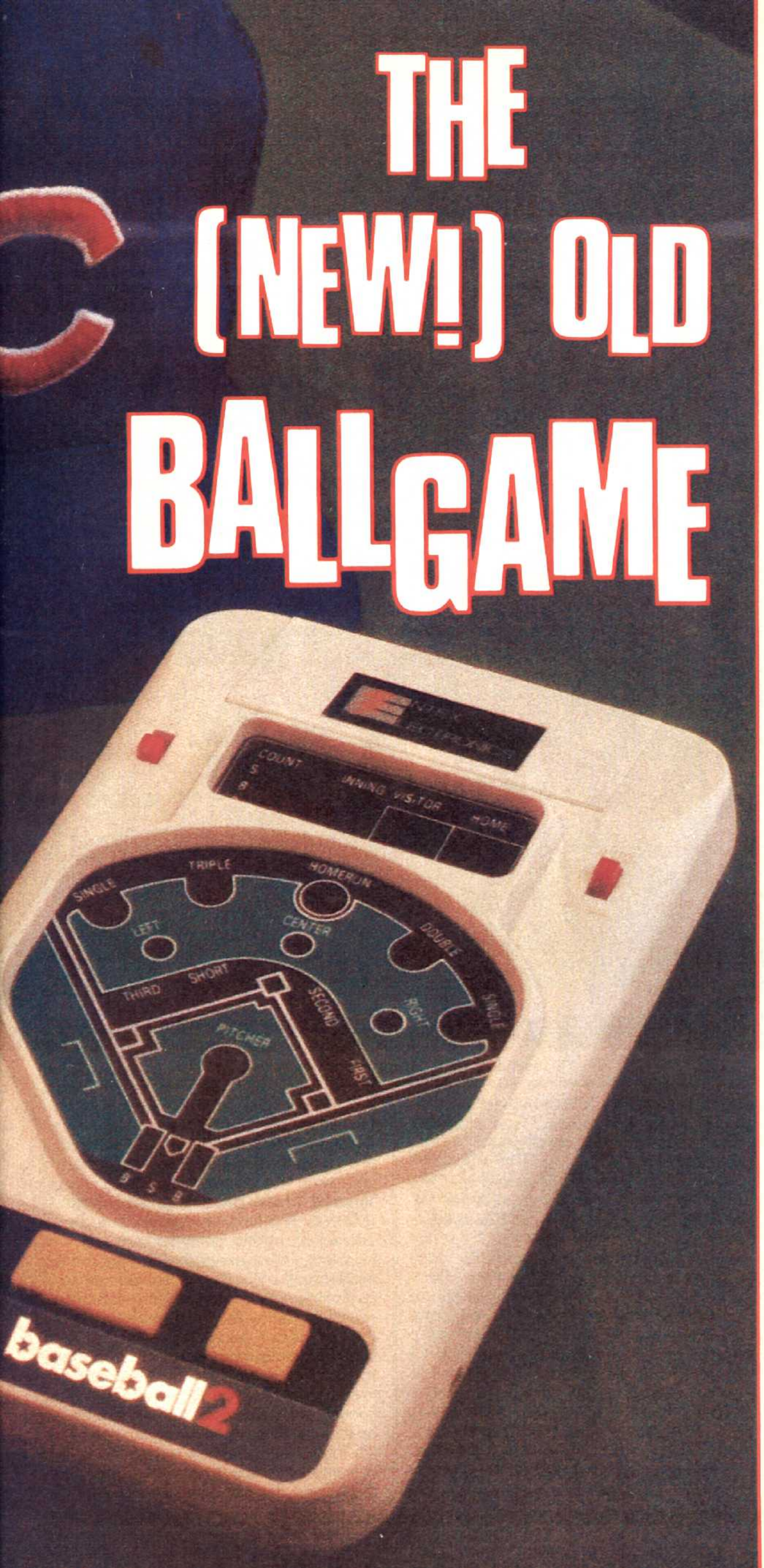
VADER, PAC-MAN LINKED!

After a rough gig, Alto "relaxes" with a short game of Super Pac-Man. "I don't like to blow my own horn, "says the humble Mr. Reed. "But I learned this technique from Luke Skywalker!" Sure, Alto. Not long after, he was carried out crying "Remember the Jedi! My life for Obi-Wan!" Life on the road will never be the same...

Our author liked all three of these games but warns:
don't be the Cubs!

MATTEL ELECTRONICS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BASEBALL
CLEAR
ENTER
Ernie Banks
SHORTSTOP
CHICAGO CUBS
RUN
HIT
SCORE
PITCH
MATTEL ELECTRONICS
BASEBALL
ENTER

THE (NEW!) OLD BALLGAME



BY BILL KNIGHT

In the spring, a young man's fancy might turn to love, but a baseball fan's attention tends to head instead toward the ground-ball out (and there's no sex there, slugger).

Baseball is meant for summer sun and dusty diamonds, but to every fan falls a little rain delay. Indoor alternatives had to be found. Once these small-scale variations on the sport arose, it was only natural that gamers stormed the game rooms of America and took command of baseball's *new* ballgames.

While jocks itched for outdoor pursuits, underdeveloped types perfected many types of "baseball" contests to befuddle and otherwise intimidate creeps with biceps. During the reign of the Roman Empire, dice were invented as another version of the then-popular "Gaul-ball." During the Dark Ages (before movable type and the Designated Hitter rule), feudal wars were waged with Crusades trading cards (anyone out there got a Lancelot rookie card from 997 A.D.?). And in the New World, countless explorations of the Old West were enlivened with 19th Century renditions of baseball board games ("Hey—let's have the Aztecs take on the Donner wagon train in a best-of-five series!").

With the advent of the microcomputer and the popularity of wasting entire summers away in the privacy of your own home, VIDIOT decided to update history texts on the current indoor baseball games. Our scouts scoured arcades near baseball card bubble gum factories, video retailers known to have whirlpool/resuscitation chambers in their back rooms and toy stores with sock-filled locker rooms hidden in crawl spaces to file this report.

Before I finished, I found a surprising underworld. I always assumed most gamesters thought a "reserve clause" was having a token hidden in your shoe. I knew they were into hi-tech games about throwing turtles, wrestling foreign cars who've dug into your sleeping bags, and singing in the rain, but now they've also *mastered the national pastime!*

Not even Fernando Vidizuela could resist the lure of a snappy hand-held game or a VCS cart once he hears that sharp crack of the joystick.

☆☆☆

Ninety percent of baseball is half-baked. The other half is totally fried. While the powers-that-be cry about the integrity of the game, they merchandise it like *E.T.* runaway kits. Looking for new and popular games, it's difficult to locate them amidst other licensed trivia. There are baseball banks, Band-Aid dispensers with your favorite club's logo on it, dwarf bats that are really deadly-weapon ballpoint pens and catcher's masks that can double as toilet seats.

B. Knight

In *Peanuts* they play hardball, on *Cheers* they talk about the Red Sox. Reggie Jackson has endorsed VCRs and even Tony the Tiger swings lumber on boxes of Frosted Flakes.

The games? They're *everywhere* once you know where to look. Aside from the "real world" game of bloody spikes, smashed helmets and broken 38-ounce blackjacks, VIDIOT has narrowed baseball to three major categories, each with games that are league-leaders and some that are strictly second-division.

HAND-HELD GAMES

A game in the hand is worth two in the bush leagues. Baseball's Great Thinkers (Jimmy Piersall, Toni Tennille) talk about it being "a game of inches." Hand-held contests are—literally. They're the fast-food franchises of game-playing—quick, clean and concise. There's no Dugout Dread like Board Games and no Infield Fly Fear like that experienced at arcades.

BB-10 Baseball Game (Casio): This wiener-sized game/clock/calculator gives the term "squeeze play" a new meaning. An ingenius display screen shows the whole field *and* a coordinated zoom-lens view of the pitcher and batter's box. The full "game" is a 10-game series against the computer, with each opponent better than the last. Pitching is accomplished through three control buttons that speed it up and move it around. One key makes the hitter swing when you're at bat, and the computer's right-hander will put you in a slump the first few tries.

Baseball 2 (Entex): This is a pretty typical HH item, except that when two are playing, the pitching module can be detached for increased sneakiness. Pitching is random junk (or *planned* stuff with two players) including a knuckler, but the batting is dull—Entex decides with little fanfare what your "swing" should produce: hit, homer or a hot zero. Running is not required unless you try to steal in the 2-player mode, when a combo pick-off/pitch-out is also possible. But Entex needs an angle. How about making it the Japanese counterpart to Mattel's HH game with Hari-Kiri doing the play-by-play?

Head To Head (Coleco): If Entex has the Asian entry, Coleco's Head To Head is Cuban: hot, rhythmic and full of smoke (the directions even come in Spanish as well as English). It mixes up the pitches (or let's the second player do so) and offers a difficulty switch to accelerate the velocity. Head To Head is a real *batter's* game, as one can hit for power, hit-and-run, tag on a flyball or bunt. It's only shortcoming is the lack of space for your fingers. You couldn't squeeze a Cuban cigar in there, much less a player's two hands.

Pulsonic Baseball I (Mego): Leggo my Mego! Most HH dandies have good painted fields, but this game's molded-plastic "stadium" is so lifelike, you expect a miniature billboard reading "Hit This Sign and Win A Fruit." Other than that, Pulsonic is pretty standard, with the game itself pitching to the offense, who can only steal in addition to trying to hit.

Mattel Baseball (Mattel): This came out in 1979, but it's still the HH equivalent to the ivy-covered friendly confines of Wrigley Field. The circuitry is tricky when pitching ("beginner" or "pro"), a good thumb-response test. After contact is made, the batter must run (or overrun or take an extra base), and the game gives different hitters different paces. There are no game errors, but a homer sets off red flashes and tinny beeps like the Red Alert on a two-man sub. Foul tips: a speedy runner can *always* turn a possible triple into an inside-the-palm home run, and reaction-time is helped when you hold the game perpendicular to your face, improving the perspective.

World Championship Baseball (Mattel): This is a new generation, but instead of making earlier games obsolete, it just expanded on HH groundwork. WCB is as complicated as Tommy Lasorda's celebrity coaching schedule, but is the most challenging of the HH games once mastered. I'm surprised it doesn't include a button for rotator cuff surgery. Two Intellivision-like keypads let you enter an entire lineup, position by position. Although it has sound effects like dying horseflies, it's fairly realistic. The view of the field is from the perspective of an upper box seat down the first base line. The

HOME TEAM
PREVIOUS HIGH SCORE
VISITING TEAM
1 1
4 1
0 0
STRIKES
1 2 3
OUTS
1 2 3
Williams
SHORT-STOP
ONE PITCHES WHILE OTHER BATS

B. Knight

Just don't let Ozzy know about the bats!

pitching is tough, and there's constant double play trouble. The cover is irritatingly reflective, but after ten minutes at this, your family will wonder if you moved away.

Coach's Box: On the lighter side of HH games is **Digital Diamond.** What screwball did *this*? It's just barely electric, with more cheap moving parts than a tinker toy set. It's inexpensive ($10) and overpriced.

Microvision's **Blockbuster Baseball** combines likeable aspects of Casio's particle screen and the flexibility of cartridge systems (Blockbuster also has Star Trek, Sea Duel and other space and sports games), but it's still one long seventh-inning stretch.

The best advice for Hand-Held skippers: Name your teams. Sparkling lights and funny noises are fine, but it's more fun to root for teams with handles like Woodpeckers, Tulips, Sloths, Cubs or Honkers.

CARTRIDGES

Tackling VCS games about bone growth, brain death and bad guy wrath is one thing. But few compare to the computer's skill in skunking you at baseball. There's little strategy in cart-ball; it's largely wham-bam-thank ya, Sam. I have to go to bat for the cart concept, though. Sure, some of the flickering wraiths posing as players throw the ball all over the field and other ghosts run like they're recovering from a bad case of mumps that went down on 'em, but most videogames offer a measure of relief when stranded at home during summer droughts.

Home Run (Atari-VCS): This should be titled Home Run Derby. You can play against the computer, but what's the point when the only way to make it fun is to see if you can blank the machine or score 100 runs? There're only three fielders, so the action's not exactly electric. A real St. Louis Brown-out.

Major League Baseball (Intellivision): Here's the standard against which all video sports should be measured. Aside from the initially awkward keypads (they feel fragile, though under the game's strain they stay sturdy), the game is tops in graphics, sound effects and authenticity. The keypad comes in handy for controlling all nine fielders and deciding which of eight possible pitches to unleash. It treats all batted balls as grounders (even homers, oddly enough) but the hitter can go with the pitch—poke to right, pull to left—and after reaching first, burn up the basepaths. Defense is genuinely important, not something for the non-batting player to do after the pitch. You can even turn two on smashed grounders. Got to be the best ballgame since the Great Flannel-Polyester Controversy. It's a wonder Mattel doesn't feature some Casey Stengelese coaching signs from the third-base box.

RealSports Baseball (Atari-VCS): Lots better than Home Run, but not much more real. Newcomers will toss the ball all over the screen, fielding is as easy as typing with your elbows, the crowd noise sounds like five people giving you the raspberry, the fielders sprint like drugged slugs, but the pitching can be devious. Once the defense relies on the strikeout and puts a lot on the ball (mixing the pitches), it'll be easier to forget the cart's inconsistencies and bad visuals (GREEN BASES!). On offense, only game 1 is easy to hit (power the slider to Home Run Land); 2-3-4 are Whiff City. If you get on base, stealing is required to score. After enduring a very few games, the players are all the same: ideal and dull, like the Yankees in the '60s.

Super Challenge Baseball (M-Network-VCS): It's a relief to see Mattel get bombed occasionally after their perfect game for Intellivision. Players must know baseball fundamentals for this to be remotely tolerable. Fielding is weird (no shortstop!), running is bad (automatic: boring), non-existent batting is adequate at best, and only pitching presents any interest. Tenth-inning tips: cross-breed pitches like mutant hybrids, and come up with nicknames for these faceless players to keep you awake (Dodo, Skeets, Twitchy, Arky, Suitcase, Flea, Schoolboy, Bad News, and Hack are my starting lineup). You'll never have to ice down your joystick wrist with this.

Tornado Baseball (Astrocade): Bally's Astrocade packages baseball with hockey, tennis and handball, which is like making your Grandma sleep with the Three Stooges. Pitching is the only field action, but the main problem is its unnatural system controller—shaped like a broken handle off an Afghan rifle. Not even as "exciting" as Dogpatch, at least this has a console calculator to let you do your math homework or taxes, which are *more fun*.

Coach's Box: Emerson Radio's **Arcadia 2001** also has a baseball game for its system, but both are difficult to track down. Vectrex hopes to have a mini-cart for its stand-alone unit out this season. And ColecoVision's **Contact Baseball** (with Super-Action Controllers) is due out any inning. Although priced at about $75, that includes controllers which will be usable with other ColecoVision games—and required upcoming carts like boxing and football. The improved keyboard (speedroller, four fire buttons and knob/stick) are super-sensitive: they respond like kitty whiskers.

ARCADES

Arcades aren't exactly home entertainment, but some people do call the attendants Mom. Major League Baseball has limited its electronic wizardry to bench-warming computers that spew out probabilities on Steve Carlton fanning Dave Kingman (.955) and exploding scoreboards. But it sired a subculture of pinball and videogames that let any 98-pounder be Babe Ruth—for the right price.

Deluxe Short Stop (Williams): Almost priceless, with a colorful, old-fashioned back scoreboard, a rapid machine pitcher and a small diamond displaying baseball figurines batting and running. Strawberry Shortcake at Comiskey Park.

The player needs the reflexes of a snake to hit in Short Stop, as both the "fast" and "slow" pitches roar out of the blind chute like bullets with your initials carved on the tips. Once contact with the pinball is made, it rolls to outfield holes labeled double, out, etc. There are also a few ramps which can guide and loft the ball into the seats, but rarely do.

One or two players can participate, and there are no balls nor walks, so it's a fast quarter's worth. However, you get two plays for 25 cents and a chance to match like other pinball games.

Double Play (Midway/Bally): Here's a *Pong*-era video game that's still fun, though expensive (a quarter only gives you one inning). The 1- or 2-player game has a CRT screen projected on a green and brown field, and offers a control panel consisting of a batting button, a pitching joystick (slow-fast-curve-scroogy) and a dial to move three outfielders. The remainder of the defense is solid, with randomly-occuring errors helping to make it "realistic." The computer pitcher is a grandstander who'll set you down, wondering where your quarter went if you're not alert.

Deluxe World Series (Chicago Coin): Yet another almost-antique, with marble-sized ball bearings rifled at the batter like heavy metal peas hurled from Mound Olympus. The game is a six-foot cube featuring a metal ballpark wall designating out or hit, extra-base or single. Besides racking up runs, the player can try for "extra innings" with homers, which also cancel an out. The batter calls for the type of pitch desired (straight, slider or curve) and responds to it when it emerges from a ramp/trap door. To swing, a two-inch steel button is depressed (or beaten), but there's no penalty to take a pitch. It's difficult to lift the ball into home run territory, although line smashes are a snap once the timing is perfected (after about four dollars).

Whether an eensy steel ball or a husky horsehide one, a hit's a hit. And the Great Equalizer, fatigue, stays in the showers for all these arcade games. ■

HARDWARE / SOFTWARE

THE NEW WAVE COMPUTERS

A Complete Guide To The Next Step In Videogames And Personal Computers

BY RICHARD ROBINSON

After spending the last year establishing their basic product lines and promoting themselves so the public would know they were in business, the manufacturers of computer hardware and software have taken their second big step. Mixing consumer reaction to their products with what they hear from research & development, the circuit sellers have introduced their "Model Twos"—their second level products that "improve" the initial products with which they entered the market.

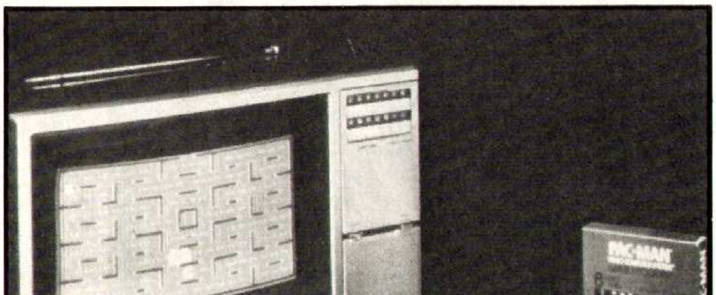
In home videogames, this means much more versatile hardware, more "professional" extras, and more reasonable prices as the competition heats up for your hardware/software dollar.

In personal computers, this means the arrival of all those accessories the manufacturers were only talking about last year, the introduction of new lines of personal computers from manufacturers who are only now getting into the competition, and significant price cutting as manufacturers discover how much consumers really want to pay for home computers as opposed to the price tags the manufacturers thought they could get away with when their first products came on the market.

This *VIDIOT Guide* assumes you have a general knowledge of the game and computer action to date, so we won't bore you with the how or why, just feed you the what and how much.

VIDEOGAMES

ATARI: The dust has settled, not to mention the prices, and Atari is now the only videogame hardware company with two machines on the market. The original home game computer from Atari is their Atari CX2600 which is now sold for $99 or less. The 2600 comes with both paddle and joystick controllers and Atari's Combat game cart to get you started. Then there's Atari's new 5200 game machine, which is discounting for about $200 or less. The 5200, as noted in the last issue of *VIDIOT*, has improved graphics, sound, and player controls. In fact, the 5200 is the result of Atari's experiences with the 2600.



Atari 2600

Game carts (the manufacturers called it "software") for the 2600 include programs from Activision, Coleco, Parker Brothers, and Atari. Prices, discounted, range from about $20 to about $30. Carts for the 2600 include such classics as *Defender* (Atari CX2650); *Berzerk* (Atari CX2609); *Zaxxon* (Coleco 2454); *Donkey Kong* (Coleco 2651); *Space Invaders* (Atari CX2632); and *Frogger* (Parker Bros. 5300).

The 5200 game carts include some repeats from the 2600 cart list, but all the 5200 carts have improved graphics, game sophistication, and other pluses that are inherent in the higher powered 5200 system. Carts for the 5200 can be gotten from about $25 to about $30 if you shop around. Among the carts now out for the 5200 (all from Atari) are: *Missile Command* (CX5202); *Space Invaders (CX5203)*; *Centipede* (CX-5215); and 5200-upgraded versions of *Defender* (CX5218) and *Pac-Man* (CX5208).

Coleco 2413

COLECO: ColecoVision offers their Coleco 2400 game machine, which is sold at discount houses for $180 or less. The 2400 comes with Coleco's latest tech controllers and can handle a number of expansion modules which make the system surprisingly versatile. These extra plug in modules include the Coleco 2405 (about $65) which allows the ColecoVision machine owner to play all Atari 2600 game carts on the Coleco machine (see story below). There are also modules like the Coleco 2413 (about $65) which comes with a steering wheel/control pad and foot pedal/controller plus a Turbo game cart.

Coleco manufactures some arcade favorites in their own game cart series. These include *Donkey Kong* (Coleco 2411), *Mouse Trap* (2419), *Lady Bug* (2433), and *Zaxxon* (2435).

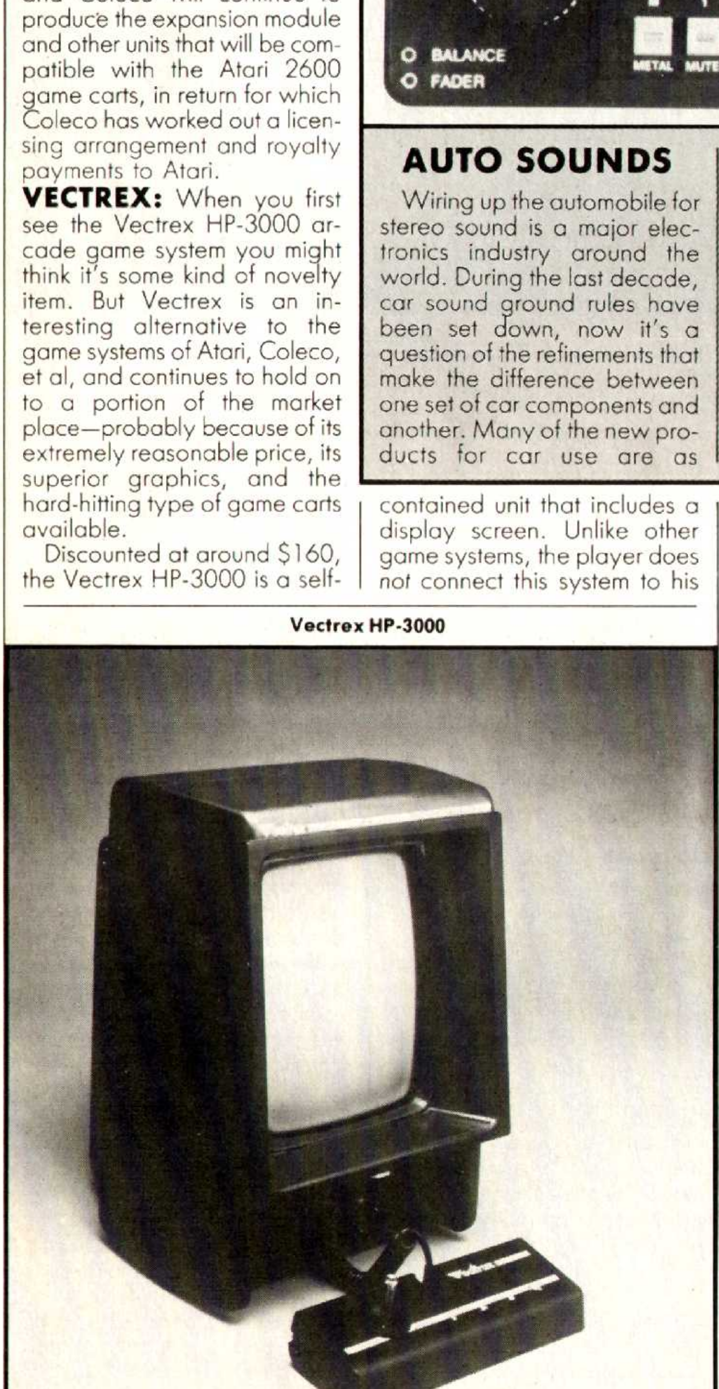
ATARI VS. COLECO DUST SETTLES: Although the most game carts specifically designed for a particular home game system are found in the Atari catalog, ColecoVision has been able to claim that there are more games available for their game system than any other, because not only can you play all the Coleco games on your ColecoVision machine, but with the Coleco Expansion Module 2405 you can play all the games designed for the Atari 2600.

Needless to say, Atari wasn't smiling about this situation—and the result was what *Variety* reported as "$850,000,000 worth of lawsuits between the two." That's right, close to a billion bucks in lawsuits—you'd definitely need a computer to keep track of that. Basically Atari sued Coleco about the Coleco Expansion Module, but what happened next is being kept confidential. However, an agreement has been reached and Coleco will continue to produce the expansion module and other units that will be compatible with the Atari 2600 game carts, in return for which Coleco has worked out a licensing arrangement and royalty payments to Atari.

VECTREX: When you first see the Vectrex HP-3000 arcade game system you might think it's some kind of novelty item. But Vectrex is an interesting alternative to the game systems of Atari, Coleco, et al, and continues to hold on to a portion of the market place—probably because of its extremely reasonable price, its superior graphics, and the hard-hitting type of game carts available.

Discounted at around $160, the Vectrex HP-3000 is a self-contained unit that includes a display screen. Unlike other game systems, the player does *not* connect this system to his home TV set. Instead, the Vectrex has a special TV display screen which is especially designed to produce high resolution video graphics (similar in principle to the special computer terminal display screens). The result is graphic special effect potentials that home TV sets and other home game machines just aren't designed to produce—including 3-D rotation and zoom.

Vectrex HP-3000



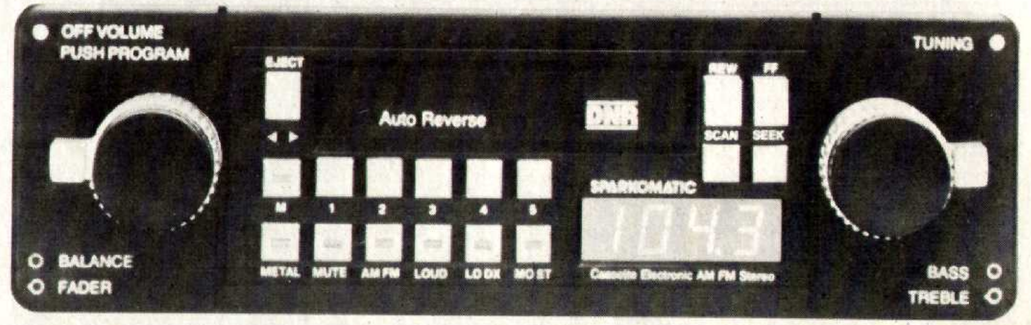
Vectrex program carts discount for $30 to $35. The company does have some arcade "name game" carts such as *Berserk* (Vectrex 3302); *Star Trek* (Vectrex 3107); and *Rip Off* (Vectrex 3102), but most titles are originals, although the search-destroy type of program predominates, with titles like *Cosmic Chasm, Solar Quest, Space Wars, Star Hawk,* and *Hyper Chase*.

INTELLIVISION: Mattel Electronics' Intellivision is the third of the big three home game cart systems. The Mattel Intellivision 5872 home game machine discounts for about $160. It is known as the Intellivision II and it is reported as having "improved playing action, action sound effects, 3-part music and high resolution graphics." The controller is also beefed up with a keypad, reset switch, and other features.

Like Coleco, Mattel's Intellivision has a special expansion module. The Mattel 3330 (about $65 discounted) plugs into the Intellivision or Intellivision II and provides amazing sound synthesis including the ability to synthesize the human voice. Mattel has created special game carts like *Space Spartans* (#3416) and *B17 Bomber* (#3884) which take full advantage of the sound synthesis module.

Game carts for Intellivision II sell at discount for about $30, and include classics such as *Zaxxon* (#2487), *Donkey Kong Jr.* (#2671), and *Dungeons & Dragons* (#3410).

DISCWASHER and other companies are creating accessories for game machines, expecially a number of upgrade controllers. If you aren't satisfied with your current joystick action, check out the Discwasher Pointmaster Pro or the Wico Command Control, either under $25 at discount houses.



AUTO SOUNDS

Wiring up the automobile for stereo sound is a major electronics industry around the world. During the last decade, car sound ground rules have been set down, now it's a question of the refinements that make the difference between one set of car components and another. Many of the new products for car use are as sophisticated (and costly) as anything you might buy for your home stereo system. But there's no question that they deliver comparable quality as well. A case in point is the new SR 308 Electronic Auto Reverse Cassette AM/FM Stereo from the Sparkomatic Corp., with a retail list of $249.95. The SR 308 is a totally futuristic unit that pumps out 45 watts of sound power; a digital computerized radio station memory to provide recall of 5 AM and 5 FM stations at the touch of a finger; built-in Dynamic Noise Reduction (DNR) to reduce audible tape hiss inherent in recorded cassettes and minimize noise present in radio broadcasts; and controls that include auto reverse, automatic radio seek and scan, bass, treble, left-right balance, front-rear fader, and a half dozen others.

HARDWARE / SOFTWARE

HOME COMPUTERS

ATARI 400/800: The big news in Atari home computer circles is that the price keeps coming down at the discount houses. So the cost of the Atari 400 16K basic computer is down to $200 and below at discount houses in New York City and elsewhere, while the Atari 800 can be had, for under $500, with 48K.

While both datacassette and disc drive have been available for the Ataris for some time, there are a number of new peripherals that have recently been introduced. Among them is the Atari 1025 Printer, which will sell for under $500 and is an 80 column dot matrix printer; the Atari CX-488 (about $225 discounted) which is known as the Communicator II—it's a direct connect modem and includes a Telelink II cart and a free hour of time with a major phone-link data base; and the Atari 1020 40-column color plotter/printer, which will sell for around $250.

As far as software for the 400/800 Ataris is concerned, there continues to be an ever expanding list of both game and special interest/use programs from a number of manufacturers, including Atari, Synapse, CBS, Datasoft, and On-Line. Game carts include all the usuals, like upgrade versions of *Pac-Man* (Atari CXL 4022) and *Gorf* (Rocklin). There are also game carts that take advantage of the expanded memories of the 400/800 such as *Sands Of Egypt* (Datasoft 1180) which requires 16K RAM and comes on a disc.

Special interest software makes a fair stab at getting the Atari 800 owner feeling like an Apple owner, of sorts, with carts, cassettes, and discs like *File Manager 800* (Synapse), *Visicalc* (Atari DX 5049), and *Letter Perfect* (LJK). Prices for these kind of special interest programs range from $30 to $200, depending on who's producing it and what format it comes on.

COMMODORE: Commodore's Vic-20 continues to sell for less and less—last year it cost $250 or so, this year the discount stores are selling it for $130 or so—which is enough to annoy those who paid for one when they could have bought two for the same price a year later.

Which is an object lesson about being the first on your block with a new electric toy—if you want to buy it for half the price, wait till next year.

Commodore also has the Commodore 64 out now, an upgrade from the Vic-20 that comes with 64K RAM and has a 179K disc capability. The 64 sells for about $380 at a discount (*now*, we should add, because who knows what it will sell for next year, hey, you guys at Commodore, doesn't this hurt your sales? Your image? Your credibility? It sure hurt our pocket book when we paid too much for your computer.)

Commodore Vic-20

Peripherals keep coming for the Vic-20 and C-64, including a new color printer/plotter, the Vic-1520, which will sell for under $200.

Game and special use software is available for the Vic-20, we can't say much good for them—in fact they seemed pretty stupid, but then maybe we're brighter than the average Vic-20 game player. Don't forget: you may have to upgrade the memory to 8K or more on your Vic-20 before you can use some of the software. The C-64 has some game carts available, but the accent here is on things like *Easy Calc 64* (#C64200), *Easy File 64* (#C64201), and *Easy Script 64* (#C64207).

PANASONIC: The first big Japanese electronics firm to jump in with both feet. (Where's Sony?). The Panasonic JR-200 is a 32K personal computer that will sell for under $300 and will initially have a datacassette (RQ-8300), dot matrix printer (JR-02P), and modem (JR-P10U) available for starters as peripherals.

To help get the JR-200 off the ground, Panasonic will offer also three dozen programs on datacassette for the system, with prices ranging from about $15 to about $35. The accent will be very Atari 800-like with lots of games (*Medieval Castle, Vortex, 3-D Maze*) and a reasonable array of "home finance" type programs (*Personal Bill Paying, Checkbook, Typing Teacher, Electronic Speed Reading* are among the first inspirational titles).

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS: The TI 99/4A is holding its own in the home computer market with memory expansion, disc drive, and dot matrix printer available. There's also a speech synthesizer.

STEREO
Panasonic
STEREO
STEREO

VARIATIONS

Panasonic has come up with yet another variation of the cassette/radio theme. This is their RX-1960 (about $135 discounted), which is a stereo cassette recorder/player with built-in AM/FM stereo radio and built-in stereo mike. With the RX-1960, which is really a mini-system, you also get a pair of stereo headphones, plus two speakers in separate boxes. So you can use the cassette/radio unit with the speakers, or leave the speakers home and just go out with the cassette/radio and the headphones. Neat. And reasonably priced.

HARDWARE / SOFTWARE

Texas Instruments TI-99/4A

TI 99/4A software includes some name value star carts such as *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* (PHM 3125), and *Mission Impossible* (PHT 6047). But most cart games are of the *Blasto, Munchman, Voodoo Castle* type, which means you haven't played them in arcades and don't know what you're getting until you've spent your money (sorry no refunds on cart games).

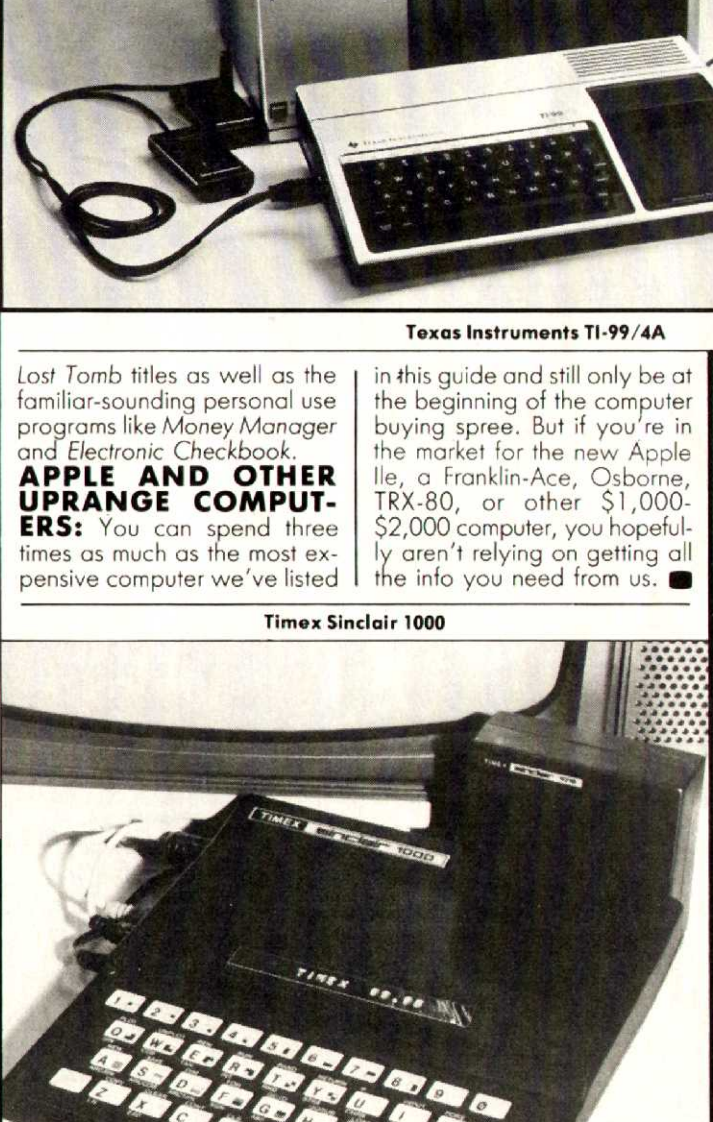
TI also has the usual rundown of personal use programs with the usual names, like *Checkbook Manager, Tax/Investment Record Keeping*, and *Cash Management*.

TIMEX SINCLAIR: The keyboard may not be big enough for human typewriter typers, but this spunky little computer, selling for way less than $100 (some ads in NYC have it at about $57 with rebate) is hanging on and even expanding. Not only is there a Timex Sinclair 1000 and a 16K RAM expansion module (about $40), but T/S has just come out with a thermal printer (01-2040) which will sell for about $90.

While the number of programs available for the T/S 1000 won't exactly be known to you, there are a reasonable number and all are reasonably priced ($12 or less). Note that most of them require 16K, so you have to buy the T/S 1000 and the 16K expansion module before you can get into the programs. While there are no arcade star games available for the T/S, there are the usual run of *Star Battle, Robbers Of The Lost Tomb* titles as well as the familiar-sounding personal use programs like *Money Manager* and *Electronic Checkbook*.

APPLE AND OTHER UPRANGE COMPUTERS: You can spend three times as much as the most expensive computer we've listed in this guide and still only be at the beginning of the computer buying spree. But if you're in the market for the new Apple IIe, a Franklin-Ace, Osborne, TRX-80, or other $1,000-$2,000 computer, you hopefully aren't relying on getting all the info you need from us. ■

Timex Sinclair 1000



RADIO SHACK

The TRS-80 computer people at Radio Shack continue to expand their line of computers and peripherals. Latest is the TRS-80 Model 100, which, at about $800, isn't meant to be anybody's first computer. It's actually a computer terminal of sorts—with a built in modem and a built-in large screen area liquid crystal display. If this interests you, visit your Radio Shack computer store. If not, pass Go and move to the next new product. ■

SOFTWARE SOFTENS

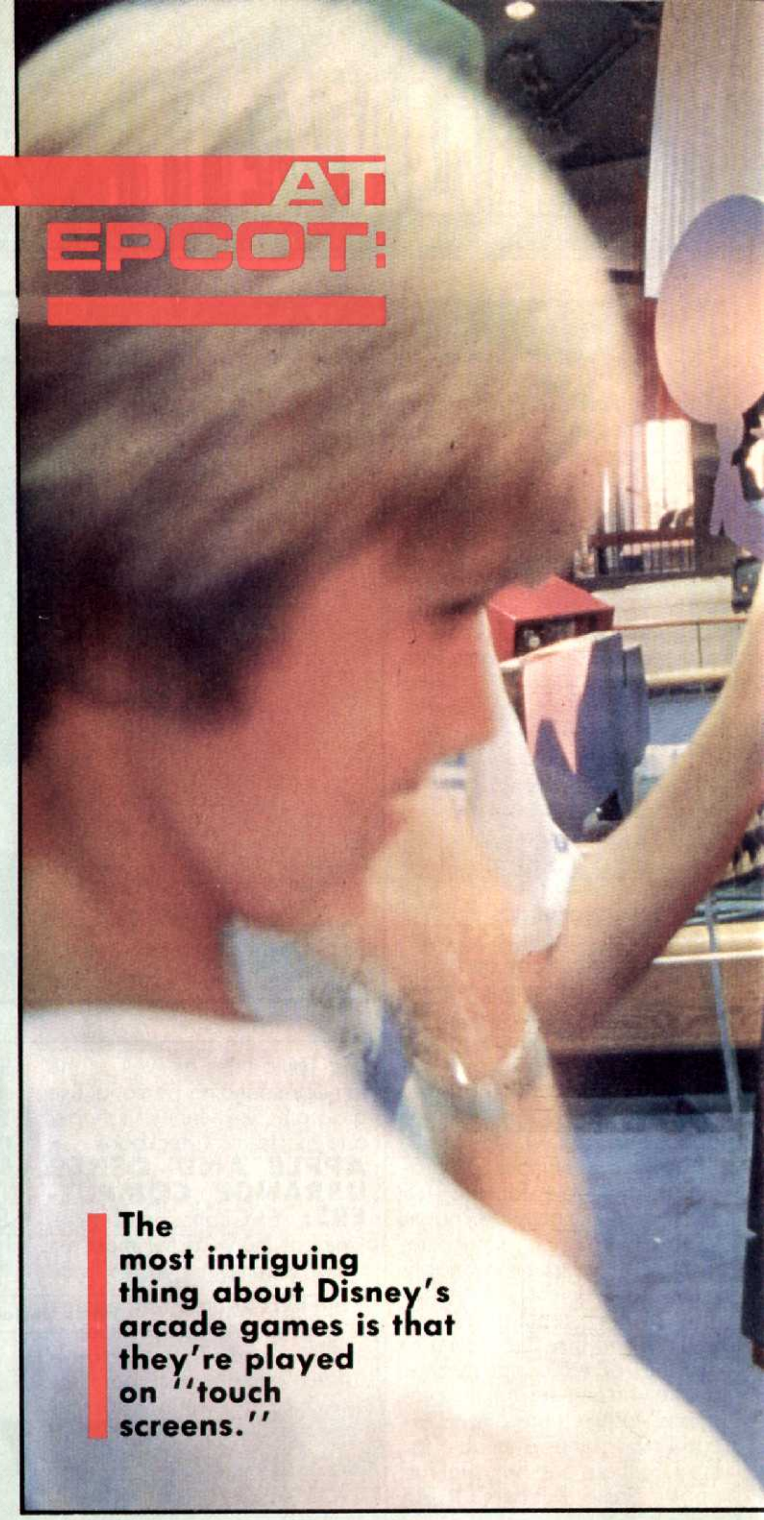
Prices are tumbling on blank and pre-recorded video cassettes, and the new low prices aren't just the result of retail stores cutting list prices to discount high mark-up items. In fact, prices seem to be leveling off at new lows. In the blank video tape market, there are a number of manufacturers now offering the standard VHS 2-4-6 hour T-120 cassette for about $8.00. If you're paying more than this, you're getting taken. In the pre-recorded video movie business, the movie makers themselves are lowering prices. Paramount Home Video started the ball rolling with the videocassette of *An Officer And A Gentleman* which sold for $39.95 on the VHS and $29.95 on beta. Now they're come back with the first $29.95 movie on VHS, the videocassette of *Airplane II*. The company says they've had to cut their profit margin to do this (hope none of them miss lunch), but it looks as if the days of the $59.95 to $79.95 movie on videocassette are over at last.

Larry Kaplan

WHAT'S HOT AT EPCOT:

DISNEY'S VIDEOGAMES FOR THE FUTURE

BY MIKE HOWELL



The most intriguing thing about Disney's arcade games is that they're played on "touch screens."

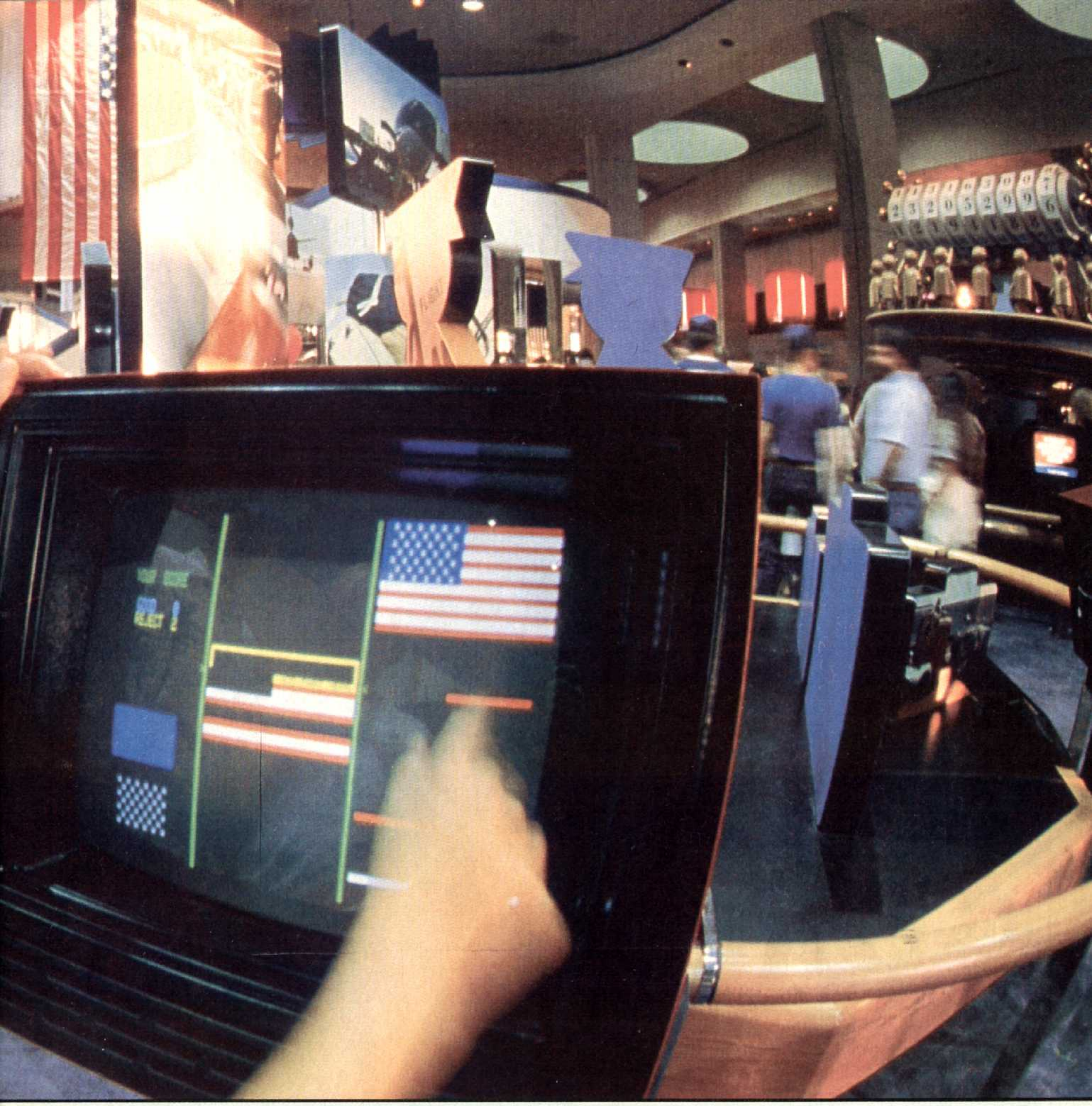
EPCOT, the billion-dollar dazzle opened by Disney last October, stands for Experimental Prototype Community Of Tomorrow. You may or may not agree with Walt's heirs that the communities we'll one day find ourselves in will include hunks of zero-gravity lettuce and diversions like trips back to the days of the dinosaurs, but there's strong empirical evidence that tomorrow's communities—like today's—will still have video arcades.

The Quarter-Gobbler of Tomorrow is located in CommuniCore East and CommuniCore West, two kidney-shaped pavillions located in EPCOT's "Future World" section, right behind the Bucky Fuller globe that you see in all the ads. According to Disney press releases, CommuniCore is a place where "industry-sponsored exhibits ease bewilderment with emerging technologies." What they're trying to say is that the various "interactive" exhibits in CommuniCore—of which the video arcade is only a small part—are supposed to prepare everyone for the Computerworld ahead. But hell, Kraftwerk was two years ago and the most striking aspect of the land of tommorrow's video vision is just how passe it is.

That's probably an unavoidable result of the other guiding principle of Future World's exhibits: Education. Thrills and motor reflex overload take a definite back seat to more cerebral pursuits—like guessing which state led the nation in wheat exports or blender production or somesuch. There's little evidence of the imagination that was Disney's calling card (although to be fair, CommuniCore is primarily designed by Sperry, not one of the most lighthearted of corporations). From a game player's point of view, the most intriguing thing about Disney's arcade games is that they're played on "touch screens." No more buttons to jab or joysticks to slam: game start, instructions, and all the (admittedly limited) actions are governed by touching specific places on the screen itself. I'm wary of this innovation coming to my neighborhood—would you like to play a touch screen game after a guy eating a steak bomb greased up the screen? Hopefully, the Disney people have some Glass Plus on hand.

So what are these games that will make us comfy with technology? Mostly a major snooze for anyone who's played anything past the original Pong. Get Set Jet Game challenges you to load the correct baggage and passengers on a plane while reacting to five "safety check" signals. Educational only if your dream is to become a sky cap. If you're setting your career goals a little higher, try The Stars And Stripes Forever, where you have to "place" the different red and white stripes (don't forget the field of blue and the stars!) in proper sequence to "manufacture" American flags. My wife Joanne, who at one time supervised piece work by the disabled, was a big winner on this one: it offered her a job in a San Juan flag factory. I retaliated by showing off my command of useless information on The Great American Census Quiz, a bank of screens that lets you pick a bland subject and then asks you a series of multiple-choice questions, like "Which city makes the most long distance calls?" A piece of cake for any *Jeopardy* junkie.

The only game that has any chops at all is the Compute-A-Coaster, where a country-talkin' beaver reminisces about how his grandaddy built roller coasters. " 'Course, we have to build 'em more scientifically now," he says, and invites us to construct

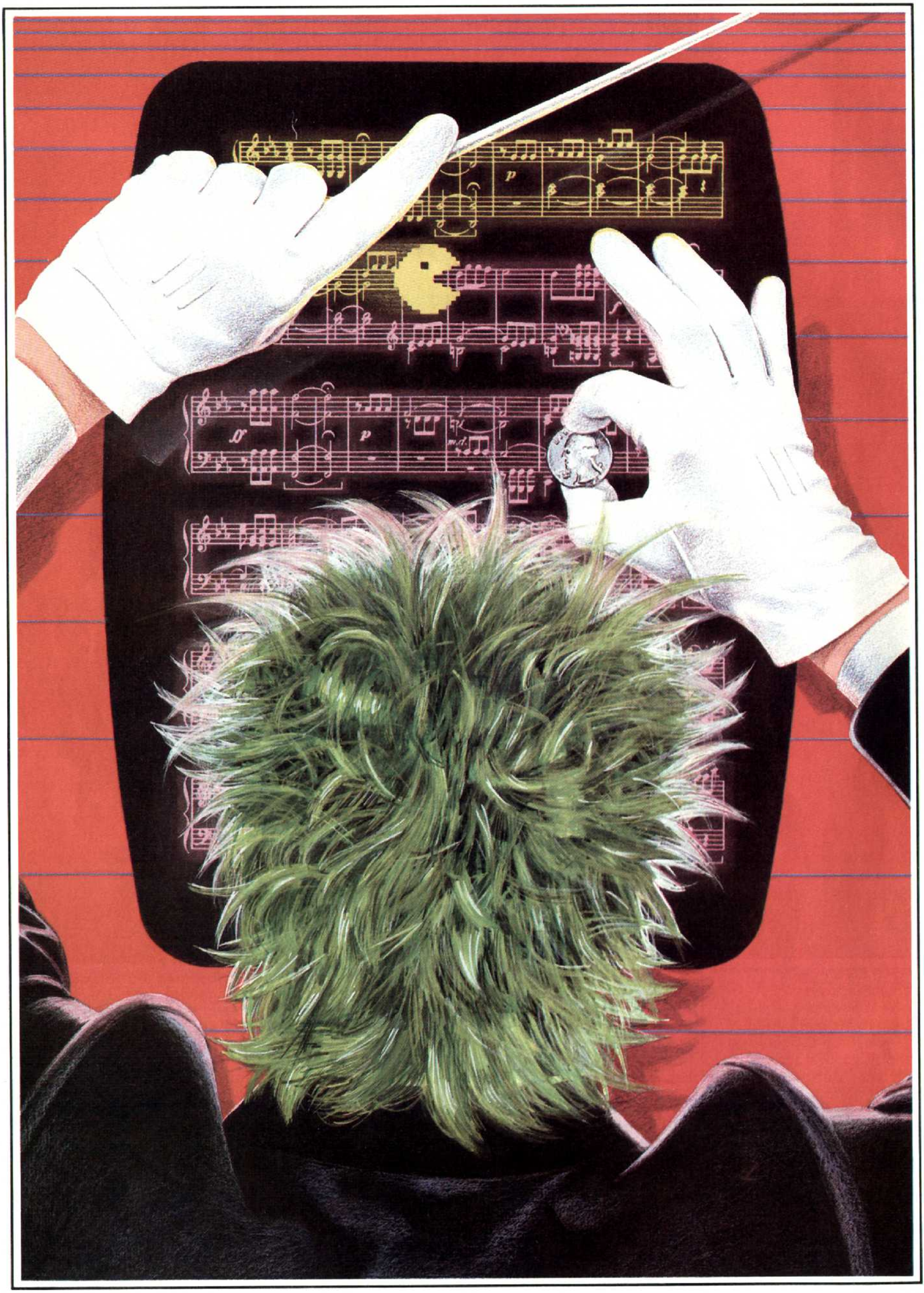


our own coaster with computer-aided design. Choosing from long inclines, loop-de-loops and other fun stuff, you touch-assemble an outline. If you get too frisky, a little red "Danger Warning" beeps and the computer won't put that section in place. But the best part is when you've positioned all your sections: your perspective pulls back, and the outline fills out into a full computer drawing of your creation. Suddenly, you're in the front seat of a roller coaster car and away you go! The computer simulates the entire ride—slowing down when you're climbing and whipping you through the loops. "Best ride I've had all day," says the beaver as you roll to a stop. Not Space Mountain, but it *can* give your stomach a bit of a turn.

What do you learn from all this "educational" hardware? First thing you learn is that Sperry sure isn't Sega or Nintendo. But more importantly, you learn that Sperry and Disney haven't been keeping an eye on the population. People wouldn't be put "at ease" by this stuff, they'd be put at complete rest! The influx of high-powered computers into people's lives has come fast and hard, and most 7-11's have more challenging electronics than CommuniCore's flag factory. When computers are a big item at Toys R Us, it's pretty easy to figure out that nobody's scared by the machines anymore. It's difficult to tell how well these games are doing what Disney and Sperry intended because that job doesn't need doing.

It's too bad, really, that in the midst of all the imagination that went into Walt Disney World, EPCOT's video games—an opportunity to let imagination run wild—are tied down to a Children's-Museum-of-Science mentality. Take a ride with the Beaver, then do what we did: hop the monorail to the Contemporary Resort Hotel, dash across the lobby and get in line for one of the TRON games. ■

©Walt Disney Productions



THE ORCHESTRA IN THE ARCADE

BY P. GREGORY SPRINGER

Step into the arcade, try to find a piece of private space, and wait. Block out the visual. Close your eyes. Let an onrush of sound attack you.

What do you hear? A blur of cacophony? The anarchy of a thousand microchips competing with each other? Or, an interwoven, technological aleatory music, a Found Philharmonic playing the 20th Century's Favorite Song?

The music of video games takes back seat to the visual effects produced on the screen, but most of the surviving popular games would have faded long ago without their hypnotically clever music. Heard separately, individual games like Pac-Man and Q*Bert owe much of their magic to the sounds they sing to every player at their controls.

Collectively, the orchestra in the arcade blasts out the kind of overlapping rhythms being created by American musical composers such as Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and Philip Glass. One could easily trace that history of dissonance and chaos to the grand old American flagwaver Charles Ives, who—in his Fourth of July Symphony—makes mincemeat and fireworks out of our national anthems.

Sounds, sounds, and more sounds. Videogame sounds are the melting pot of electronic media machine music.

Don't most games make mere artillery rhythms, variations on the basic beep-bang? Shooting is only one of many activities in a video game: there are electronically generated sounds of jumping, running, driving, flying, falling, punching, eating, swimming, hopping, pushing, kicking, digging, dancing and climbing, to name a few. Every game makes music of its own, every player conducts his own symphony at the drop of a quarter.

Many contemporary composers create what is called "aleatory music," or "found sound." By forcing the listener to recognize that music continues all around us (silence is an illusion), these composers make listening the active part of music. One music critic for the *Village Voice* some years ago analyzed what he called "zoo music" by tape recording the various cries of animals on random days at the zoo. The time has come to recognize and analyze the more common sounds around us in video games.

Maybe you think Frogger, Centipede, Pengo and the rest of the cute scaly animal games have been designed and programmed by tight-fisted money-mad videogame manufacturers rather than any lofty musical minds. Maybe you figure they created those little noises only with the intent of swallowing up the coin flow of the video-addicted universe. Maybe you're right. But nothing can prevent the sounds of silicon from adding to a listener's catalog of beautiful noise. The beep stands alone.

PLAYING IN THE BAND

WORK Pac-Man, the most venerable old man of music, has become a sound heard round the world. The opening prelude to every game echoes a call to the starting gate. In four bars of music with two instruments, a bass part and a lead line, the player hears a cheery incitement to start moving, a summons perhaps more well known than the "DIT DIT DIT DUH" beginning of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

> **Every game makes music of its own, every player conducts his own symphony at the drop of a quarter.**

Immediately following those familiar notes, the game player is handed the conducting baton.

With the joystick, each player determines how much dedicated munching noise and how many siren whoops will be heard. The siren of Pac-Man blasts out whenever the Pac-Man runs along paths he's previously gone, where the dots are already munched. The theme of the Pac-Man music is really the Work Ethic in a capsule: keep on the move, eat the rewards of your labor ahead of the competition, and expect the warning sirens to ring in your ears when you aren't making gainful progress. No matter how well you do, in the end, everybody collapses with a sound like the plug's just been pulled on your electric organ.

SEX AND VIOLENCE Arcade games have steered clear of the sexy images that pinball traditionally uses. Apart from the relatively innocuous Mae West pose of Ms. Pac-man, most battles of the sexes in video games involve romance sweeter than molasses. Donkey Kong, Popeye, Jungle Hunt, and the rest are innocence itself. Similarly, the sounds of these games sometimes seem to be coming from another planet rather than a bedroom.

The seemingly innocent Centipede has a phallic sexual component, including the gun shooting upwards in buzzing ejaculatory spurts. A victory "charge" sound results at the climax, whenever a new gun is awarded. But, when the frigid button-headed mushrooms convert back to their fleshy, vulnerable state at the collapse of the player's gun, the sound is nothing less than a machine gun rat-a-tat-tat.

Donkey Kong, supposedly a story about the conquest of true love, begins with a mystery music warning, right out of a TV thriller from the '50s. Throughout play, bombing is the sound accompanying Mario's treacherous climb. The steep ascent itself makes a burbling noise quite removed from romance or Italian hiking shoes.

Frogger has some of the slurpiest sounds in the business, with a mating dance that rivals Nijinsky's "Rite Of Spring" ballet for suggestiveness. When the frog leaps on the pink female frog's back, a shimmering crescendo of wobbling groans soars above the easy-listening background music. The happy frog, mate attached, now hops towards his home slot, which he enters with a slooshy, solid splat. Quite organic.

On the other hand, a paramilitaristic training game like Frontline features a single drummer boy through victory and defeat. That's appropriate enough, other than the fact that the soldier operated by the player walks upwards on the screen with an odd tinkle bell sound, sort of like a "beat the clock" countdown. All around this tick-tock reaper beating rhythm, grenades scream and explode at whatever rate the player chooses to fire them.

WHITE NOISE For pure, unadulterated sound, Defender remains the best purveyor of white noise. White noise boxes which simulate the ocean roar or windy nights can be purchased for the soothing atmospheres they can

Illustration by Al Brandtner

create. Defender offers nothing of the kind, but does have the kind of tuneless emotional purrs which have won it along life in the arcade.

In the opening moments, immediately after punching the start game button, a low twang signals go, mimicking the guitar string reverb opening when the Beatles played "I Feel Fine." From there on, the firing mechanism allows every player to make as much white whoosh as fast as his twitching trigger finger can flap. The little humans whose planet is threatened cry out for Defender's help, and whenever one is saved—when he leaps off the ship and back to mother earth—a wah wah pedal tremolo thanks you. At the conclusion of certain rounds, the swhoosh explosion is prolonged for several seconds, giving the player an extra rush of sound. Defender comes closest, on sounds alone, to a modern rock sound.

Krull is the newcomer in the white noise field, offering a variation in crunching sound. Sheer echoes of calculated grating accompany every rescue mission in the game. Like the world's favorite halitosis—Darth Vader's nasty aspiration—Krull turns deep breathing into a beat.

VOICES Lyrics play a very minimal part in modern arcade music. Mousetrap toyed around with animal noises, in particular cats, dogs, and a screaming hawk, and a few of the earlier games were programmed to taunt and (supposedly) entice players into relinquishing their quarters.

One of the better speaking machines is Berserk, although it too can disrupt with its speech. The taunt, "Chicken! Fight like a robot!" for example, irks players who strategically abandon a particular maze in order to advance the game logically. However, you can't talk back to the machine, and you can't explain. With sounds, though, whatever curses or groans you make blend right into the unearthly chorus.

That bizarre language is part of Q*bert's greatest innovation. The dream-state characters—a bouncing nose, a beatnik blob, a slinky snake—all speak with syllables from beyond. Their voices are unlike any but the most perverted human speech, and as the creatures bounce noisily across the pyramid of colors, a rich whirlpool of unintelligible voices chant in rhythms never imagined in reggae.

Other games have introductory remarks. Star Trek allows a few of the famous characters of the television program to narrate some moments, in particular the "Welcome aboard, Captain" greeting and the "damage repaired, sir" signals during play. This electronically simulated speech ties in with the Star Trek attempt to give the player the actual sensation of piloting the Starship Enterprise. Despite the well-known theme music which begins the game, Star Trek remains one of the least musical of all videogames.

There may be a future in lyrical games, but for the present it is sound itself which dominates and pleases. When the controls of Berzerk threaten us, "Stop the Humanoid, Intruder Alert, Intruder Alert!" it sounds almost like the beginning of another phase of futuristic rock. Maybe it's up to Neil Young and his vocoder to come up with the definitive Folk-Rock-Revisited Game. Maybe Bob Dylan should revive something. Highway 61 Roadrace, with poetry?

REAL MUSIC Theme songs and classical music infiltrate the beautiful madness of the video arcade. Popeye wouldn't be kosher spinach without his "Popeye The Sailor Man" song. Satan's Hollow enlists Wagner's "Ride Of The Valkyries," as did the movie *Apocalypse Now*. Pengo lets its penguins slide over the ice to the tune of Bach. Certain games force constant elevator ditties over the background of the action: Moon Patrol's samba sound, Frogger's carnival Muzak, and others. Of all the borrowed sounds in games, Tron is clearly the most musically attuned.

> **Maybe they created those noises with the intent of swallowing up the coins of the video-addicted universe.**

Wendy Carlos' compositions transfer well from the 70mm movie screen to the arcade video screen. Tron's songs emerge as the game is played, annoncing each victory and failure. During the Spider fighting sequence, the music continues right along until you die or until you're lifted up into the beam. Because Tron was one of the first games to have four different games included within one screen (Krull is the newest with this feature), there is opportunity for variation in the musical portion of the game, too. Playing Tron is a little like conducting a concert in four parts.

DEATH Like all music, there are themes and motifs which evoke emotions without words. Winning sounds in games are energized ups, while the sounds of death are almost universally downer, losing laments. Pac-Man dwindles down in death to the tune of a waning moan, a little weepy collapse with a kicker disintegration at the very end. As the family dies in Robotron, they cry the most sorrowful whine in the arcade. Defender's explosion is a detonation that's as final-sounding as a judge's gavel. Centipede's last gasp is a quick crash, while the sequel Millipede, curiously, dies with the buzzing of an electric alarm clock. Q*Bert's suicidal leap gives off the appropriate "Ooooooooooohhh," a fatal plunge and a cosmic joke.

Whatever your poison, there's no mistaking the final movement in a video game symphony.

UNREAL The special thing about videogame sounds is that they are recognizable. Buckner and Garcia milked this with a single ("Pac-Man Fever") and an album that actually recorded arcade musics in the background of their own insipid songs. Whether or not more records will be released utilizing videogame sounds remains to be seen, although retailers know that selling home game cartridges in record stores has become a near essential in the business. Racks of rock 'n' roll stand next to take-home videogames as though they were a marriage made in money market heaven.

Pauline Oliveros, the most recorded of women composers and a pioneer of electronic music, used to lecture on rock 'n' roll as electronic music. Once, she gave an entire performance by asking the audience to hum any note that came into their heads. Then, she sat and waited. The *New York Times* critic, John Rockwell, referred to that performance as one of the most important concerts of the season.

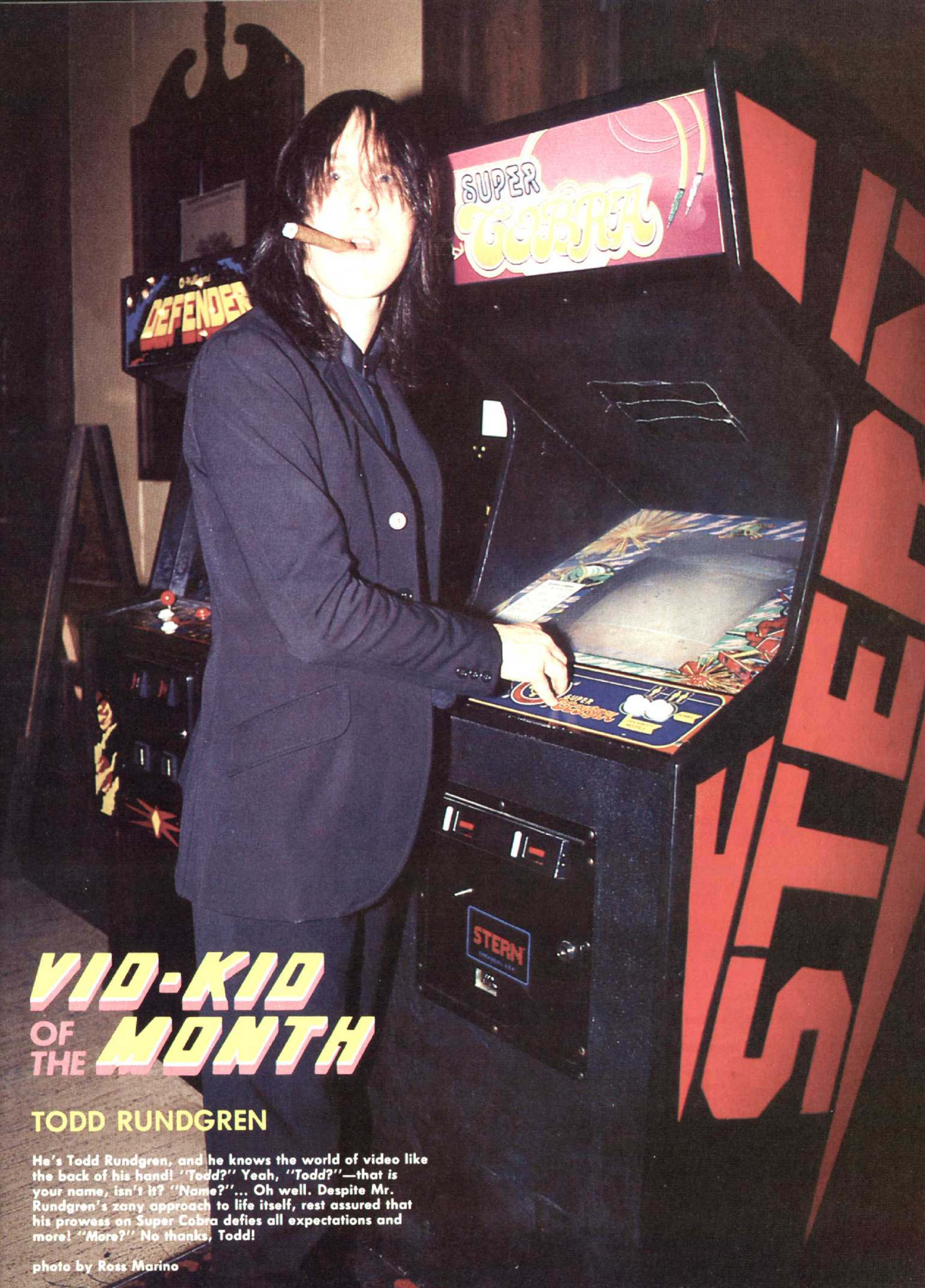
"Maybe one of the most interesting things about rock 'n' roll is that people begin to have a sense of participation," Oliveros said in a 1978 interview. "It is hard to just listen to this music; you have to move."

Videogames take the idea of musical particpation one step further. In a videogame, like the humming music of Oliveros, the player determines an important portion of the sound. Every player is also a musician, every game an instrument. The audience no longer sits and stares. Or just listens.

What is your favorite sound? Oliveros asks. The answers she frequently gets are wind chimes, babies nursing, Swiss cowbells in the Alps, voices, birds, hmmm, the bathroom door, basketball swish. Grating, cracking and grinding. The memory of undifferentiated masses of sound before auditory perception is highly developed.

What is the most silent period you have ever experienced? Anesthesia. Sodium Pentothal from an operation. An anechoic chamber in the department of Speech Pathology. Daydreaming.

The music of videogames may continue to drone on unacknowledged, but underneath it burbles the sound of the future, our musical heritage in a new arena. ■

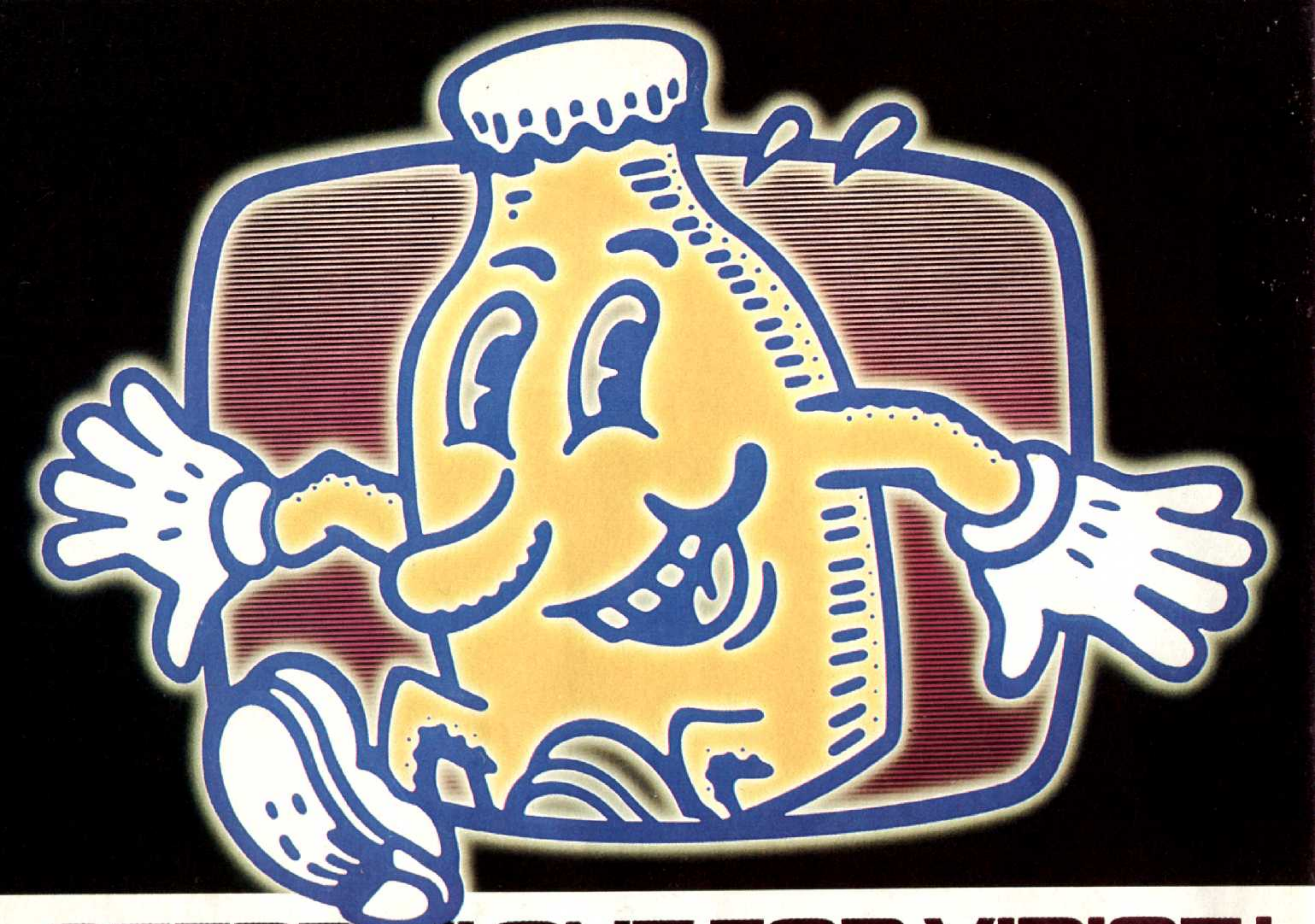


VID-KID OF THE MONTH

TODD RUNDGREN

He's Todd Rundgren, and he knows the world of video like the back of his hand! "*Todd?*" Yeah, "*Todd?*"—that *is* your name, isn't it? "*Name?*"... Oh well. Despite Mr. Rundgren's zany approach to life itself, rest assured that his prowess on Super Cobra defies all expectations and more! "*More?*" No thanks, Todd!

photo by Ross Marino



Computer Graphics by Rob Markovitz

STEPPIN' OUT FOR VIDIOT!™

Hey! Look who's steppin' out of the tube! It's Boy Howdy, the lovable mascot of VIDIOT's sister magazine, CREEM. Boy's steppin' out to find out what you—the reader—think of VIDIOT! Is there something you'd especially like to see in the magazine? Something you enjoyed or didn't enjoy? Something we left out? Let us know by filling in the survey below! Keep VIDIOT *your* magazine by filling out the questions and mailing today!!!

---

1. How often do you go to video arcades?
   - ☐More than once a day
   - ☐Once a day
   - ☐3 times a week
   - ☐Twice a week
   - ☐Once a week
   - ☐Once every 2 weeks
   - ☐Once a month
   - ☐Less than once a month
   - ☐Never
2. Do you play at more than one arcade?
   ☐Yes ☐No
3. How long do you spend at one arcade, on the average, each time you go?
   - ☐More than 4 hours
   - ☐3-4 hours
   - ☐2-3 hours
   - ☐1-2 hours
   - ☐½ to 1 hour
   - ☐less than ½ hour
   - ☐Don't go
4. On the average how much money do you spend a week on videogames?
5. How many different videogames do you usually play each time you go to an arcade?
   - ☐1 only
   - ☐1 or 2
   - ☐3 or 4
   - ☐5 or 6
   - ☐7 or more
6. What is your favorite videogame?
7. What do you especially like about them? (Check as many as apply)
   - ☐Killing aliens
   - ☐Cute video characters
   - ☐Team sport similarity
   - ☐Adventure story format
   - ☐Calculating strategies
   - ☐Electronic sounds
   - ☐Outer space simulation
8. How do you find out about new videogames? (Check as many as apply)
   - ☐Newspaper ads or reviews
   - ☐Magazine ads or reviews
   - ☐Hearing about them from friends
   - ☐Seeing them in an arcade
9. Do you have a Home Videogame system?
   ☐Yes ☐No
10. Do you own☐ or plan to own☐ (Check if applicable) one of the following systems:
    ☐Atari VCS ☐ColecoVision ☐Other
    ☐Mattel Intellivision ☐Atari 5200
11. Do you have MTV cabled into your home?
    ☐Yes ☐No

Enclose in envelope and mail to: **VIDIOT Readers Survey**, P.O. Box P-1064, Birmingham, MI 48012

NAME ____________________ AGE ______

ADDRESS ____________________

CITY ____________________

STATE ______ V-8-83 ZIP ______

12. If not, do you want it? ☐Yes ☐No
13. Is rock music played at your arcade?
    ☐Yes ☐No
14. In order to play videogames, do you spend less of your entertainment dollars on other items/events? ☐Yes ☐No
15. If yes, please indicate those items/events which receive less of your dollars (mark a, b, c, in order of those receiving less of your $$)
    - ☐Records/pre-recorded tapes
    - ☐Magazines
    - ☐Concerts
    - ☐Movies
    - ☐Sport Events
16. Do you have either of the following items in your household? (Check if applicable)
    - ☐Video cassette recorder
    - ☐Video cassette player
17. What was your favorite feature in this issue of VIDIOT?
18. What was your least favorite feature?
19. If you have a home computer, what model is it?
20. Why haven't you bought a home computer?
21. What would you like to see in future issues of VIDIOT?

READ 'em and WEEP:

Vidiot's™ Guide to Videomagazines

BY M.T. BOXX

Get ready for a *laff riot!* We'd like to share with you what are surely among the most foolhardy paragraphs ever written in the commission of a lead for this mag:

A few days ago, I was playing channel roulette on my TV between videogames and stumble-flicked upon a CBS News graphic which read simply, WOMEN—NO IMPROVEMENT.

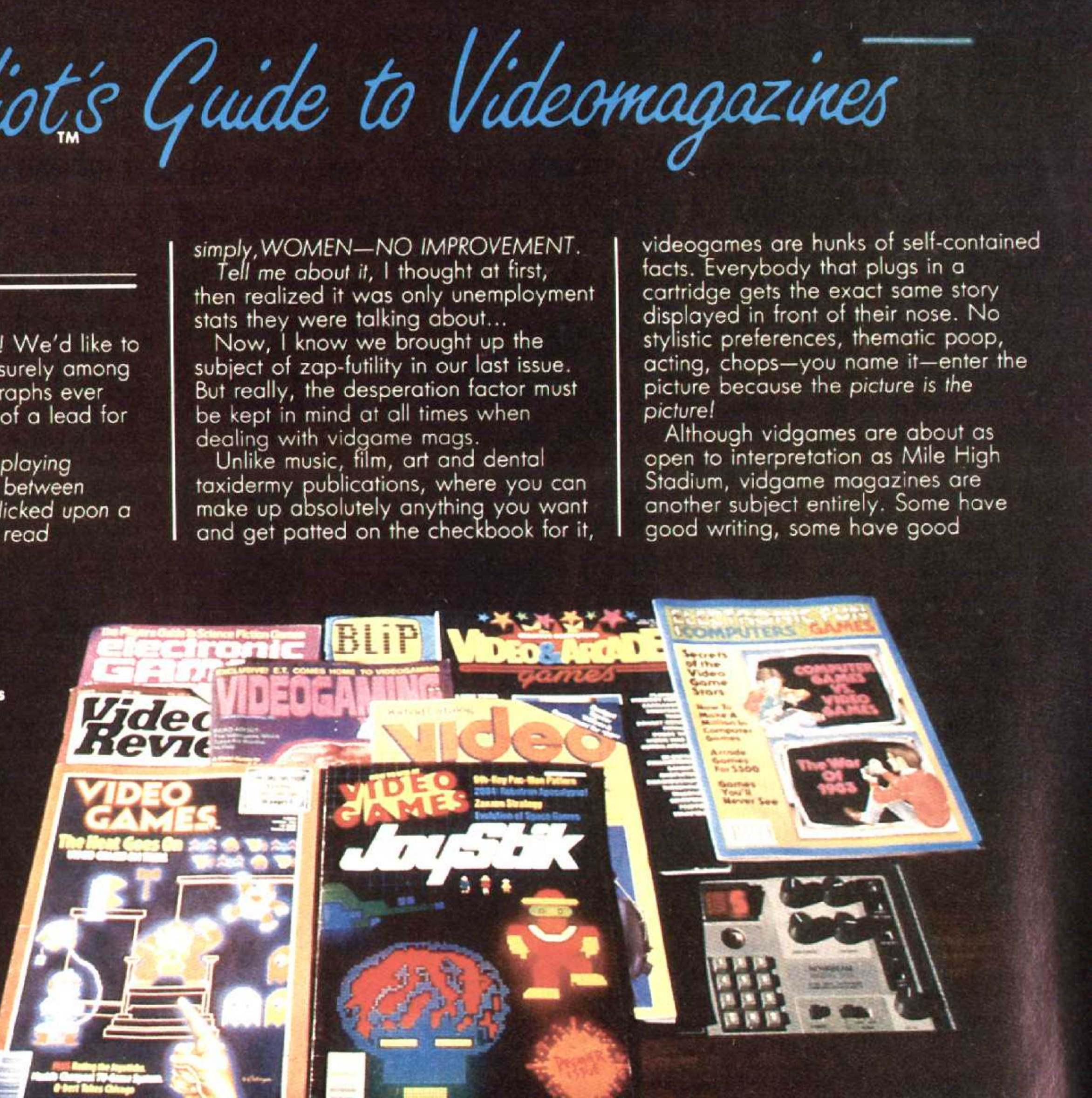
Tell me about it, I thought at first, then realized it was only unemployment stats they were talking about...

Now, I know we brought up the subject of zap-futility in our last issue. But really, the desperation factor must be kept in mind at all times when dealing with vidgame mags.

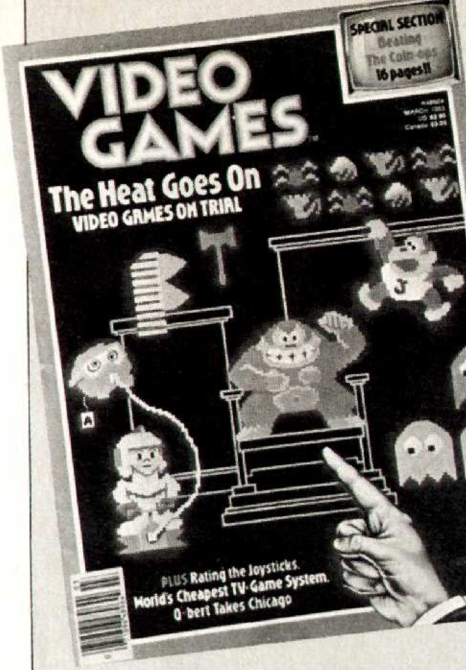
Unlike music, film, art and dental taxidermy publications, where you can make up absolutely anything you want and get patted on the checkbook for it, videogames are hunks of self-contained facts. Everybody that plugs in a cartridge gets the exact same story displayed in front of their nose. No stylistic preferences, thematic poop, acting, chops—you name it—enter the picture because the *picture is the picture!*

Although vidgames are about as open to interpretation as Mile High Stadium, vidgame magazines are another subject entirely. Some have good writing, some have good

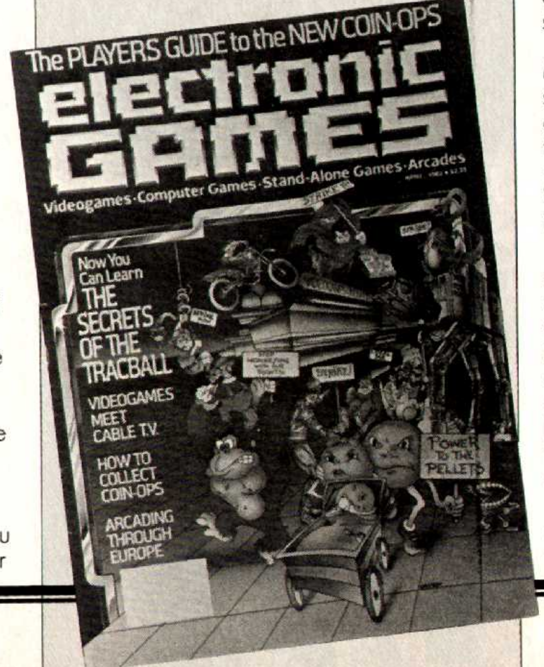
Don't blow your tokens on any of these, little gamers!



Larry Kaplan


SPECIAL SECTION
Beating The Coin-ops
16 pages!!
VIDEO GAMES
The Heat Goes On
VIDEO GAMES ON TRIAL
PLUS Rating the Joysticks.
World's Cheapest TV-Game System.
Q-bert Takes Chicago

HOW TO WIN AT VIDEO GAMES
9th-Key Pac-Man Pattern
2084: Robotron Apocalypse!
Zaxxon Strategy
Evolution of Space Games
JoyStik
PREMIER ISSUE


The PLAYERS GUIDE to the NEW COIN-OPS
electronic GAMES
Videogames·Computer Games·Stand-Alone Games·Arcades
Now You Can Learn THE SECRETS OF THE TRACBALL
VIDEOGAMES MEET CABLE TV
HOW TO COLLECT COIN-OPS
ARCADING THROUGH EUROPE
POWER TO THE PELLETS

graphics, some have good manners and some are good in bed. But there are vital differences, and guess who's gonna point 'em out?

OK, so maybe it's *vaguely possible* VIDIOT might not be the most objective source on this subject. To slightly paraphrase George Burns, we're only God when we get paid. However *yooooou can believe ussss* when we say all the other vidmags are *totally useless, communist-inspired and should be torn up, shredded and burned to ashes right now!* Ha-ha, a little competitive humor there, guys!

So feast your incisors on this consumer guide, porkchops. We'll cover all the important facets: features, reviews, art, columns, readership, hanging-in-effigy percentage, canary-to-paper ratio and treadmill test results. What more could you ask for? Accuracy? *Integrity?*

ELECTRONIC GAMES
(Monthly/$2.95/144 p./Editorial percentage 62%)
Departments/Columns: *National Vanity Board, National Arcade Scoreboard, Reader's Favorite Games* (scores/charts); *Switch On* (editorial); *Hotline* (general video news); *Readers Replay* (letters); *Programmable Parade* (software reviews); *Art Of War* (war games); *Computer Gaming* (computer software); *Test Lab* (hardware); *Insert Coin Here* (coin-op reviews); *Q&A* (reader questions); *Pinball Palace* (pinball reviews); *Stand Alone Scene* (stand alone/hand held reviews); *Strategy Session* (game strategy); *Inside Gaming* (personalities); *Coin-Op Classroom* (coin-op strategy). *Note: many of these appear on a revolving basis.*

EG is the biggie, the Smurf that *must die!* Their amazing circulation figures are...well, *not fair!* What'd'ya mean, sour grapes? We're just plain jealous!

That is, jealous of their revenues, not the content. Let's just admit, upfront, that *EG* is really a pretty decent product. There's a lot of useful info (though you must dig for it) and some of their writers are even awake!

This is a good time to bring up the "thickness" issue. It's said that Joe Mag Buyer often decides what to buy on the basis of quantity and not necessarily quality. *EG* is a strong number two among vidgame mags when it comes to page count. What must be considered is, exactly how much do you really get on all those pages?

Ads, for one thing. Over one third of the mag is advertising. No complaint here, it's not nearly as ridiculous as the "general" vid books, but it's worth noting.

Art is another big page filler. And we do mean filler, because most of their illustrations look like they're done by the same folks who provide graphics for *Sunday School Weekly.* Honest—you half expect the face of Jesus to appear in the sky and holler, *"Nothing gets out everything!"*

The art that accompanies their regular "Players Guides" to various games genres (space, football, romance with lawn furniture) is often laughable. First, they kill a full page with a splash illo, then overpower the text with huge drawings of marginal quality. All they need now is to simulcast in Kool-Aid.

Plenty of reviews here, can't nail 'em with that one. *EG* has several review sections: home games, pinball, coin-op, and the ever-popular *Stand Alone Scene,* where a representative reader is summarily picked-out and forced to *stand alone* in front of everyone!

No quibble (that's right, *quibble*) on the actual write-ups. Maybe a little too easy to the manufacturers, but hey—*gotta sell dem ads, mama!* Mainly, what we'd like to ask is *howcum you waste so much space with crummy original art?* What, no reply? Must be guilty!

You want more wackiness? Well, how about the big editorial in the March *Switch-On,* billed as a "Pledge To The Readers:" 1)"No firearms or alcohol ads!"; 2)No reviews of "offensive" games (*bull—they covered Frogger!*); 3) No "sexually explicit" ads (*ditto above*).

There's much more, but why bother—we already feel as well-protected as having overheard our doctor tell the nurse to increase the dosage.

A humble thanks, *EG,* for protecting us from ourselves! Or worse, *our imaginations!*

BLIP (Monthly/$1.00/32 p./Ed. percentage 81%)Departments/Columns: *News Blips* (general news); *Blip Tips I and II* (strategy); *Hall Of Fame* (readers scores); *Blip Confidential* (playing hints); *Clubhouse* (vidgame clubs info); *Video Jokes* (not funny); *Comics.*

Maybe it's not "fair" to review a magazine so early in its prathood (two issues as we go to press) but sorry, cruel world of publishing and all that stuff.

If you were to take one look at Marvel Comics' new baby, *BLIP,* and say, "C'mon—what d'ya expect from a comic book?," you'd be right. This is the only horse that's not in the B-pocket format (i.e., "regular" size, like VIDIOT and the rest) and is often found in the comics rack.

This is the part where we're supposed to write, "but it's *more* than a comic book!" Yeah, it *is,* but so's a shipment of mildewed sorghum or a replacement thumbsucker doll head. It's obviously aimed at the comic book crowd and it certainly reaches its limited goals. Easy to read, no big words or overly imaginative layout to confuse the toddlers.

The actual comic strips account for six of their 32 pages. Quality is A-OK, with Marvel's regular writers and artists contributing. Marvel comic characters also appear throughout the rest of the issue.

Their features are very, uh...*BLIP-like*. "Spider-Man Plays Spider-Man" featured a character in a web-nose suit playing the Parker Bros. Spider-Man cart and slugging another guy dressed up like the Green Goblin. As they say in the comics, wow.

Or how about "Videogames Of The Stars," featuring none other than Matthew Laborteaux of *Little House*! Who *is* this guy? The inventor of the Worms Eat My Garbage T-shirt? The pundit (yes, *pundit*) who coined the anthropological term *suck face*?

BLIP doesn't really "review" videogames, instead concentrating on playing hints and very low-cal strategy. Both issues so far featured *Blip Tips I* and *Blip Tips II*, each a simple, straightforward two page look at a particular game or genre. *Blip Confidential* consists of short notes on several games.

If you're "old enough" to understand this article, you're too old to read *BLIP*.

VIDEOGAMING ILLUSTRATED

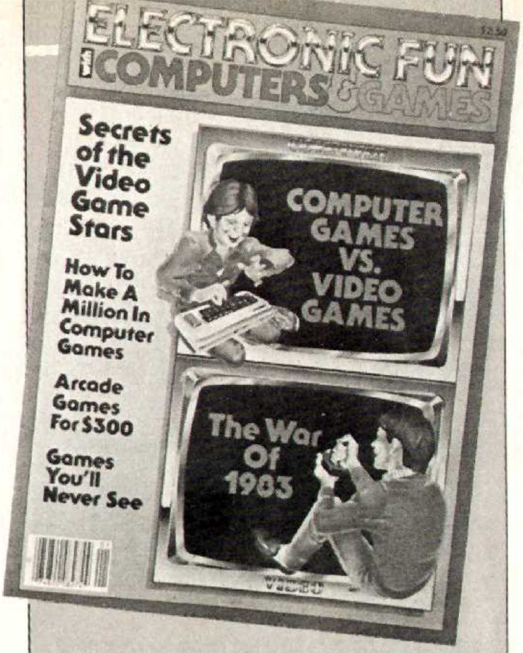
(Bi-monthly/$2.75/66 p./Ed. percentage 83%) Departments/Columns: *The Keyboards* (editorial); *Eye On* (news shorts); *Close-Up* (hardware); *Focus On* (strategy); *V.I.P.* (interview); *Supergaming* (technical poop); *Cinema* (films); *Conquering* (strategy); *Preview* (new games); *Computer Eyes* (software); Input (letters); *Print Out* (book reviews); *Championship Videogaming* (reader tips); *Star Words* (celebrity quotes); *Meet The Original* (game chronicles).

VI is another case where we've "unfortunately" seen only a couple of issues. Let's see, we used the *cruel world of publishing* song and dance on the last review. This one'll have to be the ol' *brutal realities of "lead time"* number. Anybody buying this line? Yeah? Now you wanna buy a luau pit in Greenland?

Graphically, *VI* has a ways to go. Layout is about as creative as a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Original art could be best described as *leading the witness*. The best of the color art turns out to be reprinted from elsewhere.

But hey—don't let a few rotten boards spoil a good porch! Despite the fact that Jeff Rovin "Kind"—infamous for his intensely bad television books—is the editor and founder, *VI* still has a few good points. Portions we found particularly interesting were *Cinema* (good idea, especially with the explosion of pre-sold titles) and *Meet The Original*, which gives some historical poop on game origins like, say, "Gorillas Vs. Women" for Donkey Kong.

This doesn't really have much in the way of features. They prefer to cover almost everything under their column heads. For example, *Conquering* appears in five different places in the mag, each one a two-to-five page diagnosis on an individual game (*Conquering*: Worm War 92, etc.). These articles are mainly strategy-oriented. Brief reviews are handled in the *Preview* section, where a half-dozen or so newish carts are...*you know*...previewed!


ELECTRONIC FUN
COMPUTERS & GAMES
Secrets of the Video Game Stars
How To Make A Million In Computer Games
Arcade Games For $300
Games You'll Never See
COMPUTER GAMES VS. VIDEO GAMES
The War Of 1983

EXCLUSIVE! E.T. COMES HOME TO VIDEOGAMING
VIDEOGAMING ILLUSTRATED
READ ABOUT: The Videogame Which Takes Six Months To Play
A Field Guide to Videogame E.T.s
Conquering Zaxxon and Other Top Games
Atari's Oscar-Winning Ally
Preview of Upcoming Home Videogames
HALLOWEEN SPECIAL: The Most Frightening Videogame of Them All
Computers Vs. The Occult in A New Film

BLIP
The Video Games Magazine
MAR. 1983 $1.00
Spider-Man Plays SPIDER-MAN

What's the matter, guys—cat got your brain?

JOYSTIK (Bi-monthly/$2.95/74 p./Ed. percentage 100%) Departments/Columns: Message (editorial); *Letters* (um...); *Future Waves* (news); *Innerview* (interview); *Neo* (coin-op strategy); *Winning Edge* (ditto); *Home Video* (hardware); *Computer '83* (software); *Sword of Ram* (comics); *Technocracy* (technical poop); *JoyStik Chart* (reader scores); plus fiction!

JOYSTIK is extremely buttery on the eyes. Frankly, we love the color, although sometimes we're not sure whether to look at it, eat it or wear it on our eyes. But that's another consumer guide (or special issue if *EG* does it).

Unlike the competition, *JS* boldly allows its art people to go wild, even off the deep end if so inclined. The results are well justified, even though each page tries to pack in everything but Lt. Trask's identifying mark. Quick kids—set the controls for the heart of the paint!

Another plus—no advertising! No one I've talked to can explain how these guys can *afford* their snotty graphics without ads. Undoubtedly a *crime syndicate cash laundering scheme!* Little more competetive humor there, folks!

When you get down to actual editorial content, *JS* is interested chiefly in detailed strategic examination of arcade games. They generally succeed, but honest, only hardcore coin-op kings need apply. If you're not totally intrigued with Tron, for example, you probably won't want to read an eight page breakdown of minute details and directions.

Some of the departments (*Neo*, *Winning Edge*) are also devoted to this line of inquiry. Most of the others are the standard stuff all these mags have—letters, editorials, interviews, recipes, soap opera updates, etc. A couple of innovative moves are fiction and a *Heavy Metal*-ish comic strip. *Bad* fiction. *Stupid* comic strip.

Outside of the half dozen or so major game features, there's no review section proper. No *need* for one. The whole damn rag is a review section starring five or six games.

Arcade fanatics take note—"normal" humans, roll over and play dead!

ELECTRONIC FUN WITH COMPUTERS AND GAMES

(Monthly/$2.95/102 p./Ed. percentage 77%) Departments/Columns: *Editorial* (zzz); *New Products* (hardware); *Glitches* (news); *Output/Input* (reader questions); *EFG Times* (news);

Gamemakers (interview); *Show Of Hand Held* (hand held reviews); *Screen Plays* (strategy); *Readers' Tips* (c'mon, guess!); *Reviews* (uh, letters?); *Interface-off* (panel discussion); *Reader Program Of The Month* (zzzzzz); *The E.A.T. Report* (gimme a break!); *Game Of The Month* (centerfold); Cartoons.

EFCG got off to a slow start, but now they're coming on fast as black market slither has ever since lizard sales were banned in Detroit.

Their premiere issue is a premiere issue fave of mine. First, an editorial entitled, "A New Videogame Magazine? Why?" Good question—too bad they didn't ask us!

An even more daring feature of the debut number was *no table of contents!* Awright! *Grovel* for the contents, swine!

OK, time to be "fair" now. One thing *EFCG*'s got going for it is lots of color, presented in a layout that displays mucho variety. *Mucho mucho.* So much, in fact, some ungrateful critics might be tempted to say it's sloppy, even slapdash. Retina-jarring shifts from boring black-and-white to vivid color blobs that look like a meatgrinder full of butterflies keep you awake if slightly cross-eyed.

Feature content has drastically improved since the beginning. What started as buzz-bombs like their three page interview with Marty "I have a public destiny!" Ingels or "Dear Mama And Data...Letters Home From Computer Camp" have since developed into fairly interesting stories on holography and modems. Not to mention their immortal Special Frog Supplement.

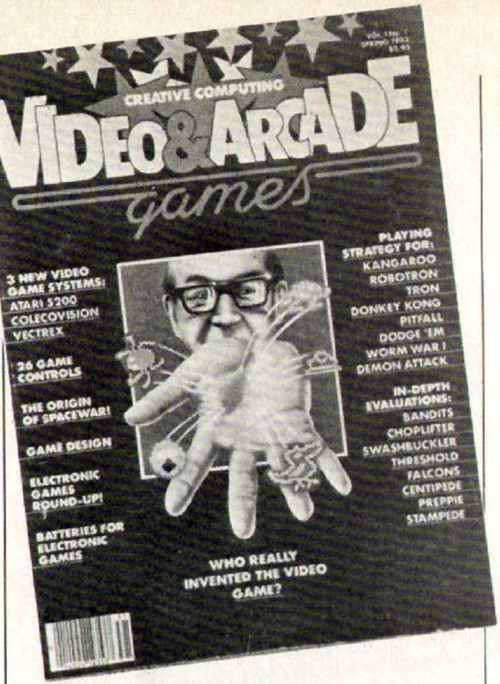
The departments range from the monumentally boring *EFCG Times* and *E.A.T. Report* (Exquisite Ant Torment? Evaporate All Tutus?) to a pretty strong eight-page review section. They cover a bunch of games with color screens, special "boxed" playing tips and a moronic rating system based on tiny black joysticks instead of the usual stars, asterisks or little boys wearing dunce caps.

The overall shotgun graphic attack suffers further in the departments, which all have huge stylized logos that look like the worst moments of the 1972 Topps baseball card set. CUBS, it should say.

Then there's the dreaded *EFCG Times* (Entirely Fictitious Critic Guy?), a news section on pages coated with some awful combination of flesh, lime and gray.

If that color scheme appeals to you, you'll *love First Screening,* where a reader sends in the program to his very own made-up game and it's faithfully reproduced—computer paper and all. Fascinating reading: *920 GO TO 940/ 930 Print #D, "YOU MISSED"/935 A(J,I) = 1.* Timeless is the only word.

Hmmm. Looking back, maybe we were a little too hard on *EFCG*. Shucks.


CREATIVE COMPUTING
VIDEO & ARCADE
games
3 NEW VIDEO GAME SYSTEMS: ATARI 5200 COLECOVISION VECTREX
26 GAME CONTROLS
THE ORIGIN OF SPACEWAR!
GAME DESIGN
ELECTRONIC GAMES ROUND-UP!
BATTERIES FOR ELECTRONIC GAMES
WHO REALLY INVENTED THE VIDEO GAME?
PLAYING STRATEGY FOR: KANGAROO ROBOTRON TRON DONKEY KONG PITFALL DODGE 'EM WORM WAR I DEMON ATTACK
IN-DEPTH EVALUATIONS: BANDITS CHOPLIFTER SWASHBUCKLER THRESHOLD FALCONS CENTIPEDE PREPPIE STAMPEDE

CREATIVE COMPUTING VIDEO & ARCADE GAMES (Published three times yearly/$2.95/130 p./Ed. percentage 85%)
Departments/Columns: *Editorial; Mastering* (strategy); *Arcade Games Section* (strategy, reviews); *Home Video Games Section* (ditto); *Home Computer Games Section* (ditto ditto).

CCV&AG packs a total-fact wallow like no one else. It'd really be great if you could *read* it without *looking* at it. If this was a better-looking package, who knows? We might have run out of snotty things to say about it.

You want reviews? They got reviews. Coin-ops, game systems, computers, tokens and even batteries get rated in this slow reading but adult-eyes mag. In fact, it's so scan-heavy, the whole thing is basically organized as three daddy-sized review sections with features built in.

We're only God when we get paid.

Take the *Arcade Games Section,* for example. First, a whole page for the logo. C'mon, ya wanna waste space, why not use horrible art or print free ads like some of these rags do?

Anyhoo, the section leads off with a copious inspection of Tron, Kangaroo, Victory and Robotron. Then a section of short looks at other recent coin-ops. Feature time next, with a pair of—oh no!—"think" pieces. Like it's not bad enough just to "think"!

What else we got here that's good? Well, pretty strong cart review pile as well. The black-and-white screens verge on uselessness, but they do cover a lot of territory, including four pages of one-line VCS updates. Fairly doze-oriented reading but mucho fax.

One feature that we particularly like was their thorough, even tedious, examination of joysticks, followed by the aforementioned battery tests. Not only did we almost figure out what a potentionmeter is, but we learned that alkaline and "heavy duty" batteries aren't as great as the manufacturers would have us believe.

Graphics are *CCV&AG*'s greatest downfall. You spot a vaguely interesting-sounding title in the contents, say "Who Really Invented The Videogame?" You flip to the page and find these massively boring columns flanked by B&W photos straight out of a 1948 Civics textbook. *Voting is your sacred responsibility as an American citizen,* you expect the caption to read.

This one's mainly for word fans. Picture peeps should look elsewhere.

VIDEO GAMES (Monthly/$2.95/106 p./Ed. percentage 75%)
Departments/Columns: *Hyperspace* (editorial); *Double Speak* (letters); *Blips* (news); *Soft Sport* (cart reviews); *Coin-Op Shop* (arcade reviews); *Hard Sell* (technical poop); *Dr. Video* (actual doctor fax); *Bull's-Eye* (business news); *Score!* (no such luck); *Stats* (score/sales charts); *Comics Relief.*

VIDEO GAMES—where did they ever come up with such an impishly original name? Ho-hum, not a bad rag considering the dullsville monicker.

At least the graphics are starting to come around after a mediocre beginning. We've been throwing around the scientific term "slapdash" a lot, and it applies here too, we're afraid. Take the *Blips* section. You open it up and there sits one very hurriedly scribbled original illo, one real nice screen reproduction and a *snoozescent* B&W head shot. You will not encounter any unexpected sensations of cool, like the Trident ad goes.

Virtually all the original art fails on an *EG* level—*Scholastic* mag outtakes and speed-of-sound drawing. Another eyesore was the recent "Beating The Coin-Ops" special, 16 newsprint pages slammed into the middle of the mag in glorious ick-and-white.

Got a complaint about the software reviews also. Didn't you just know it? It *is* a nice, organized looking section with all-color screens that look just fine. The catch is the whole section's written by one writer. He gamely tries to insert quantities of "variety," which some editors might call streaky or just plain inconsistent.

They do have the only vidgame oriented comics that are worth the eye-time, thanks to ace cartoonist John Holmstrom. Love his pictures. Now, if only he could make the *words* worth looking at too. To balance out John, they have a sword and sorcery strip of epic crumminess called The Zydroid Legion. It's the kind of garbage other artists use for paper slippers.

Take a nap. The color is better and it's still *free!* ■

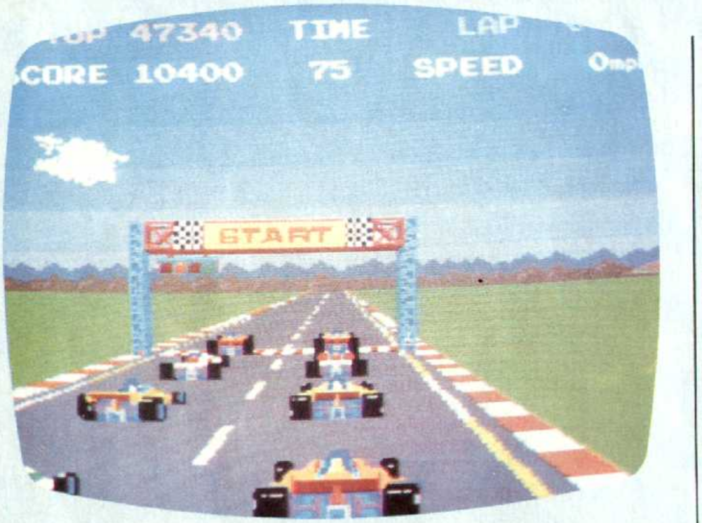
ARCADE ACTION

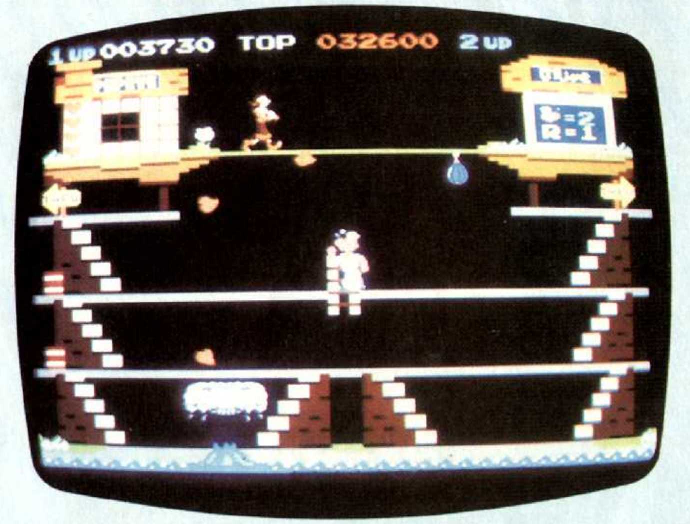
THIS MONTH'S WINNERS

(Arcade Action's winning games, listed in order of popularity are the 10 most-played games in the country as VIDIOT goes to press.)

BY P. GREGORY SPRINGER

1. POLE POSITION
2. MILLIPEDE
3. Q*BERT
4. POPEYE
5. JOUST
6. TIME PILOT
7. MR. DO
8. FRONT LINE
9. MS. PAC-MAN
10. BABY PAC-MAN

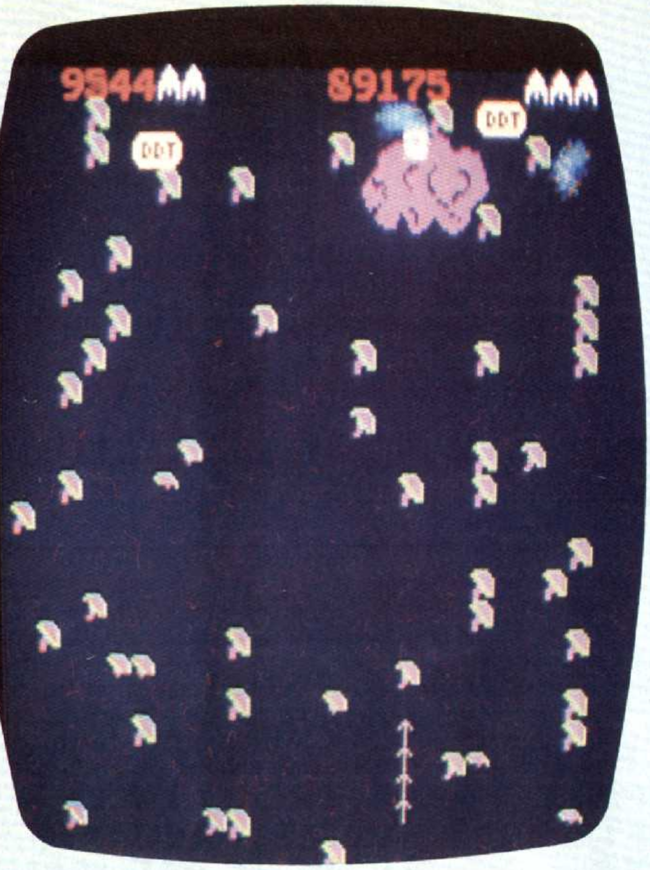




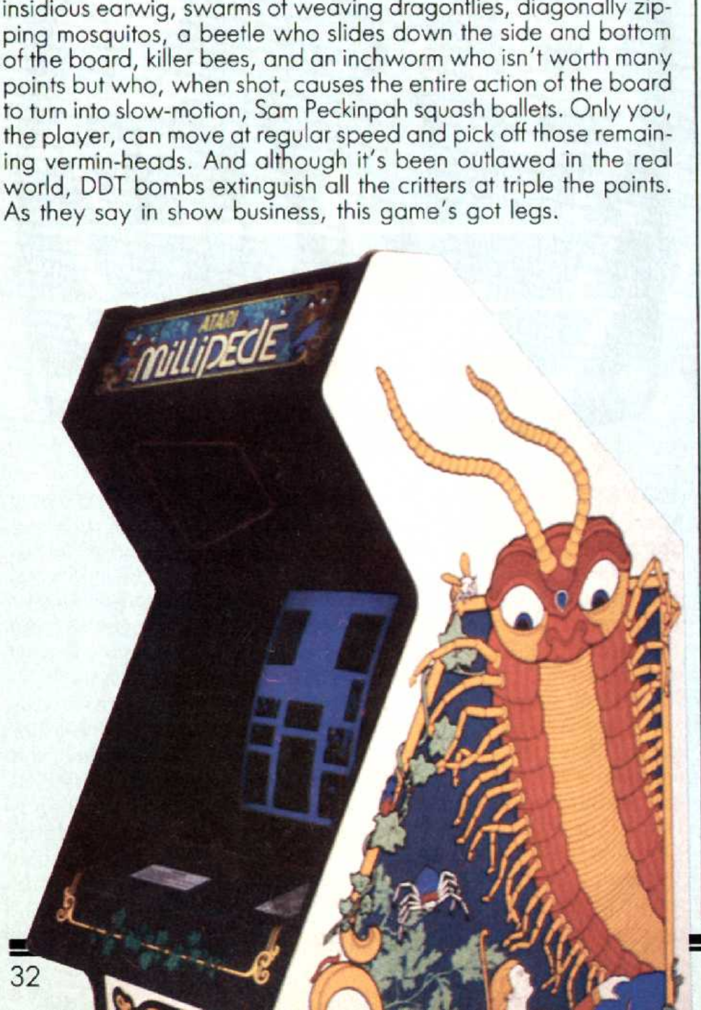
POLE POSITION—I really shouldn't have had that last beer, but, what the heck, it's Sunday, nice day for a drive, just hop right in here and take a spin around the track. Dum-de-dum-dum-dum, and off we go...Seems to be some heavy traffic out today, I'm taking my time, lots of billboards along this stretch, you'd think they'd try to Beautify Japan a little. There's a Dig-Dug sign, an Atari ad, a U.S.A. travel map (have to go there some year). Maybe I should start speeding up a bit here. Whoa! This baby really moves. Here comes a corner. Yeeeeeeeee-ow! Oh, I think I'm gonna be sick! Slow down again, gee. Maybe I'll even pull off the road. No cops are around. Drive on the grass a while. Hey, this is a gas! Here comes that billboard again. Am I going around in circles, or what? You know, I bet I could squeeze under that Centipede sign. Just drive right up to it...Stop a minute. Sure, we can go under that. Ease down on the pedal, and... Blooiecrashhhhhhhh$%''$%#$%#$%#$. What! My ranking is 297? Listen, I'm just glad I can still walk. Let me out of here.

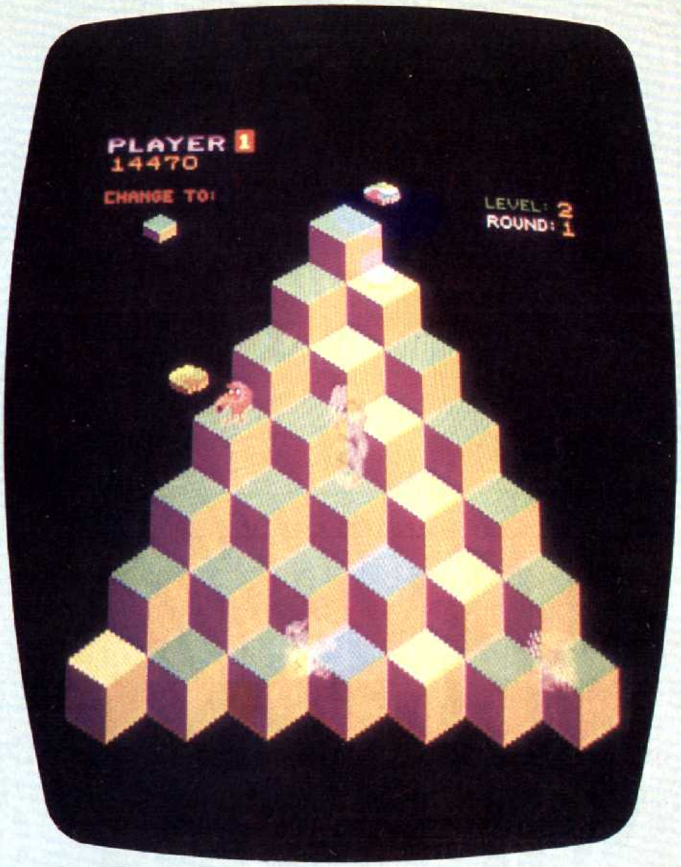
POPEYE—You can't really blame Brutus. He slides in on bent knee, begging for the heart of the heroine, Olive Oyl, and she snubs him outright. I'd be mad, too. As sailors are known to frequent the sea, this neighborhood floats over water, very precariously. When Brutus falls, the earth itself moves laterally with earthquake intensity. When Popeye falls, in his scurry to curry the favor of the lady and the flavor of lettuce, he simply splashes into the drink. It's too bad Popeye can't one on one with the hulking Brutus, slugging it out. With spinach, or course, he always wins, but without it, he turns tail. He's henpecked on the other end of the scale, too. If he misses one of Olive's love tokens, she tells him a thing or two, pointing to the broken heart at the bottom of the board, and waggling her finger. And do his friends help? Nah. Overweight Wimpy munches burgers on the down side of a teeter-totter, while Swee'pea floats idly above dangling from a balloon. The life of a sailor sure is a rough one, and not a tavern (only carry-out) or a health food store in sight.

Screen photos by Larry Kaplan

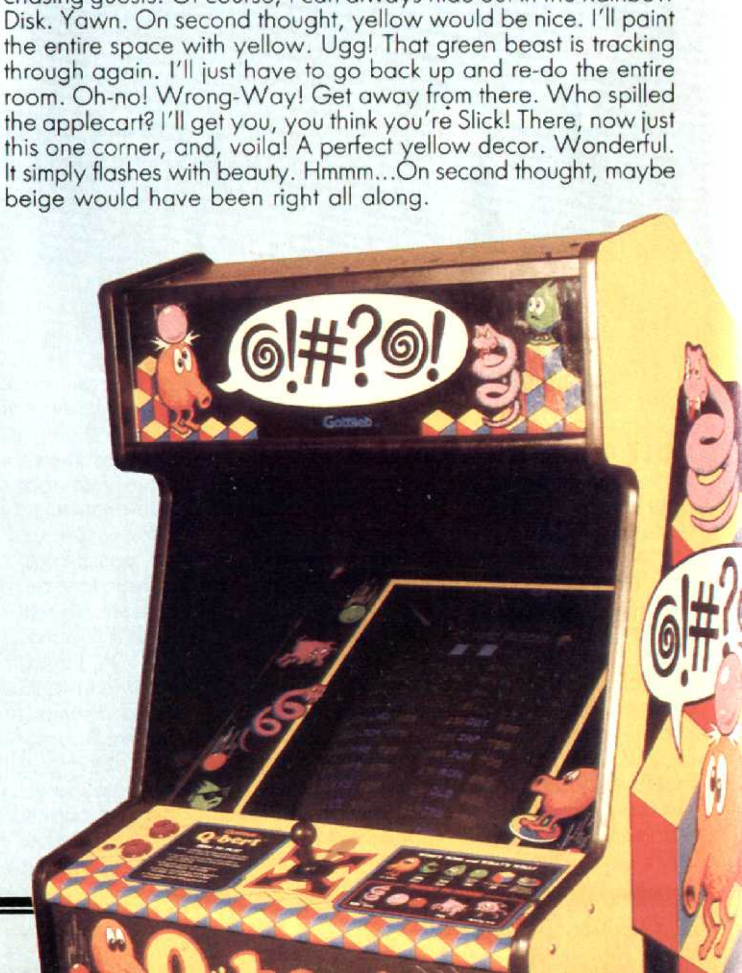


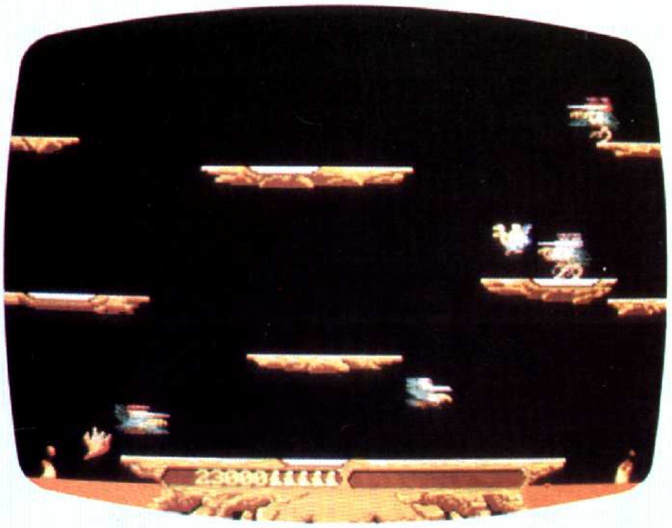
MILLIPEDE—The creepy-crawlies just got creepier. We always knew there were more cockroaches hiding behind the screen, and here they come. In Millipede, the centipede's friends (spiders, falling fleas, and horizontal scorpions) are joined or replaced by the insidious earwig, swarms of weaving dragonflies, diagonally zipping mosquitos, a beetle who slides down the side and bottom of the board, killer bees, and an inchworm who isn't worth many points but who, when shot, causes the entire action of the board to turn into slow-motion, Sam Peckinpah squash ballets. Only you, the player, can move at regular speed and pick off those remaining vermin-heads. And although it's been outlawed in the real world, DDT bombs extinguish all the critters at triple the points. As they say in show business, this game's got legs.





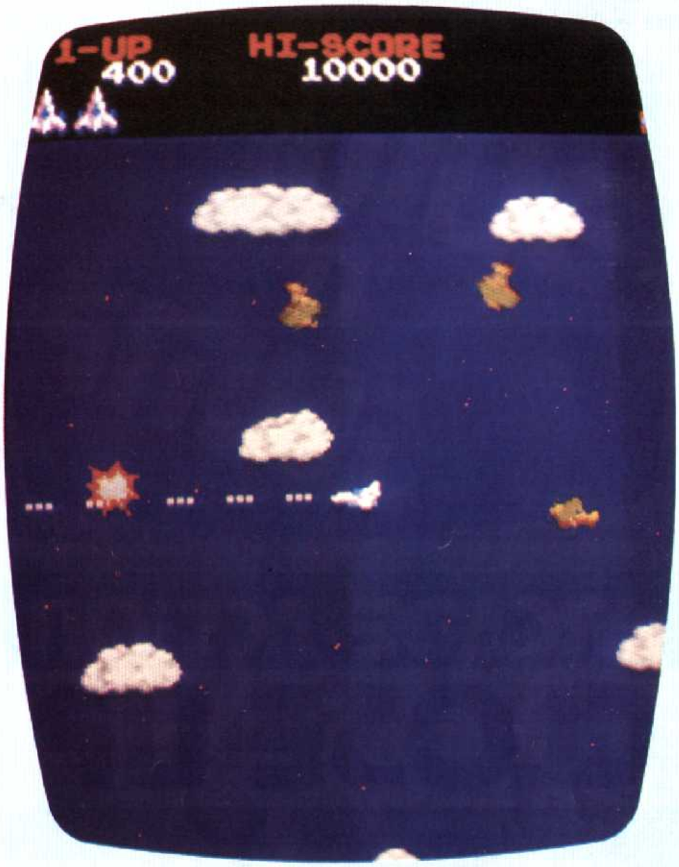
Q*BERT—Now let's see. I need something subtle to coordinate with this long orange nose. How 'bout some deep blue? A few leaps here, and there, and now a touch of flesh-colored pink. Hmmm. Not bad. Oh, but what about that $%#&7# snake Coily? His purple clashes with everything. And he's so rude, always chasing guests. Of course, I can always hide out in the Rainbow Disk. Yawn. On second thought, yellow would be nice. I'll paint the entire space with yellow. Ugg! That green beast is tracking through again. I'll just have to go back up and re-do the entire room. Oh-no! Wrong-Way! Get away from there. Who spilled the applecart? I'll get you, you think you're Slick! There, now just this one corner, and, voila! A perfect yellow decor. Wonderful. It simply flashes with beauty. Hmmm...On second thought, maybe beige would have been right all along.





JOUST—The flapping Anti-Gravity game introduces prehistoric enemies one by one. The Lava Troll is a relatively ineffectual slob, who hangs out in the burning mire and grabs the tail of any passing ostrich. The Bounder is your basic working-stiff jouster, just out for a rumble. The Hunter has more dedicated aims in mind; this guy's a serious headbanger. Tremble in the path of the resurrected Shadow Lord, whose lance pierces with precision. Finally, there's the erratic Pterodactyl, whose glide over the floating rocks is punctuated by screeching attacks, deadly, nigh invincible, unpredictable. Joust has few competitors or imitators for its fantasy world. The sounds of flapping and flying make up the music of the game. The eerie landscape echoes silences from a forgotten past. Even after the game ends, remaining eggs hatch into the predatory fighters, buzzards pick them up, and life goes on in the mythical predawn history screen.

JOUST
JOUST



TIME PILOT—Why do I always sing Eric Burdon while playing this game? "How high can you fly? You never, never, never reach the sky..." Fact is, Time Pilot (not Sky Pilot) does resemble a space battle on acid. You start at the turn of the century, fighting rickety biplanes and zeppelin motherships, and—if you're good—end up in Outer Galactia, battling space saucers amid floating asteroids. As a central, static time pilot, your fighting ship has 360 degree mobility, but is tethered to the center of the screen. Kinda like having one leg tied to the corner of the boxing ring. Kinky. Remember, you must down 56 enemies and shoot the mothership seven times before you can time warp to the future. And try to save the falling guys in the parachutes, okay? It's a long drop to the bottom of the screen.

TimePilot
TimePilot

BUMP 'N' JUMP

ARCADE ACTION CLOSE-UP

Speed is king in racing. If—at those blinding and illegal velocities—one happens to collide with a brick wall, it's adios, Charlie.

The Demolition Derby—the most dubious and American of all sports—on the other hand relies upon collisions. Ramming into other junkheaps creates a special kind of energy and an escape valve in an auto-obsessed world. You can get it all out of your system, crashing a hunk of steel evilly into the turkey in the next lane driving backwards.

Put them together, and you have Bally's Bump 'N' Jump, a video race game with the capacity to bump and rebound from the other cars on a scenic unpredictable track.

Oh, one other thing. When you punch the jump button, your car flies.

In most videogames, touch alone can be deadly, not only with brick walls, but even with friendlier substances, like people. Carried over into life, this can be an unhealthy attitude, particularly when polite social gatherings or procreation are involved.

In Bump 'N' Jump, touching is allowed. You're free to bang into other vehicles without exploding. The point, however, is to try to shove other cars into the brick walls, so they explode and your points accumulate.

Most videogame races simulate life in the fast lane, giving the illusion that the player sits in the driver's seat and life is passing him by...very, very quickly. Bump 'N' Jump, as a road race and elbow room game, gives a bird's-eye-view of 32 seasonal, winding, treacherous courses. The landscapes of those courses, the action of the race, and some strategies are described below. But first, some playing eccentricities should be explained.

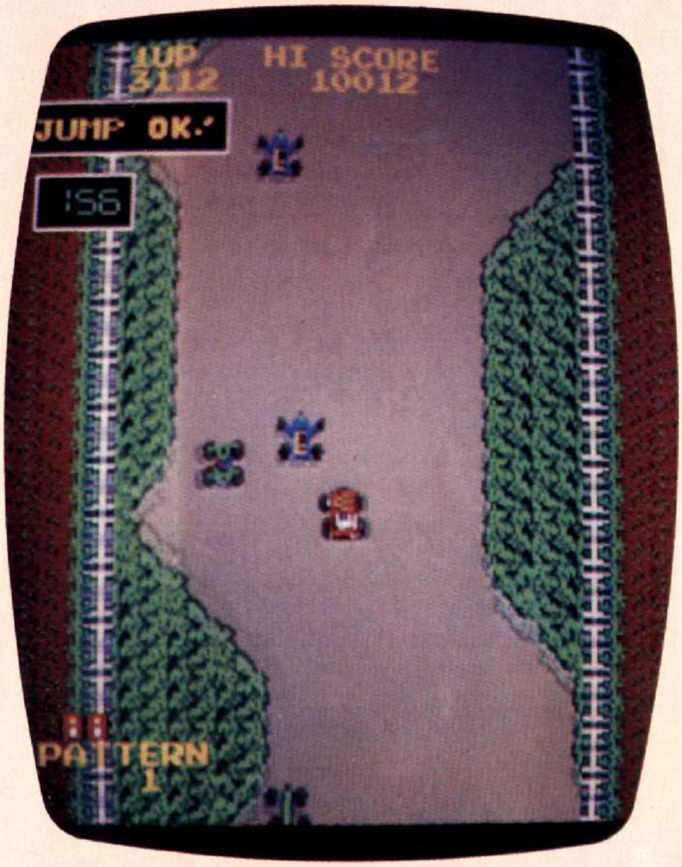
Certain machines may be programmed to allow the game to continue on the same course where the final car exploded. Although there's only about six seconds time for you to stuff your hand into your pocket, fish around for another quarter, jam it in the slot, and punch the "one player" button, these machines are still preferable to those which are set always to begin again at beginner's course numero uno. Not only do you then have the option of learning, step by step, the ins and outs of many different courses, the machine also will keep track of how many quarters you've spent to get to that level. "Credits 28, Course 8," it will read, meaning you've spent exactly seven dollars and you still can't jump over the complex system of canals.

Every so many points (70,000 on the machine I favor) a new car is awarded, but how do you get points? Smashing other cars is one way. Basically, there are three different bounties for forcing vehicles off the track, and it's a bump or be bumped world. For 200 points each, there are three kinds of clunkers in your way. One of them looks like a tractor. For 300 points, five different jalopies share the track, including an ugly green custom job, a boy scout derby, a treaded Caterpillar, and a dump truck. That dumpster drops its load right in your path for a painful smashup, so beware.

And for half a grand, two monster jalopies are coming at you. One's a sleek racer; the other wears a death's head on its hood.

All three values of the competition bump off the road with about the same amount of ease, so when you decide to get aggressive, go for the death's heads and racers.

You may not, however, wish to get so pushy. Nothing on the board rules informs you that you earn a bonus 50,000 points if you successfully make it through an entire course without smashing any cars. In the first two or three rounds, that may be the best approach to take. (Maybe it's best always to try to get through peacefully. You'd have to smash at least 50 cars to earn that much in a round.) Of course if you slip, causing even the most rickety heap to total, your point score is going to look pretty silly at race's end. But if you make it, 50,000 is a quantum leap, almost a bonus playing car in itself.

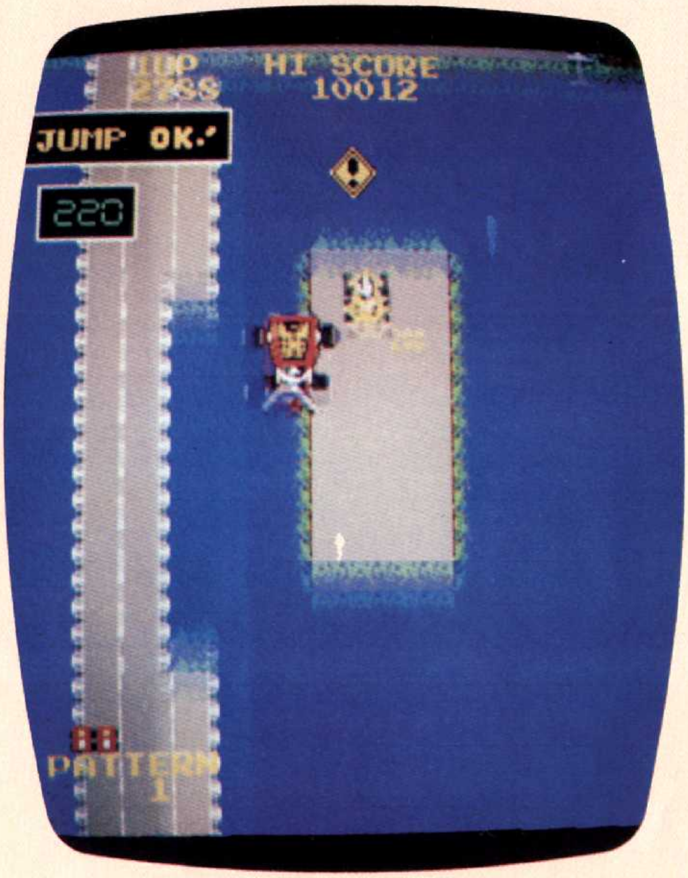


Getting through the course at all, with or without any pileups, earns bonus points. For every car forced into oblivion, an additional 300 to 500 points are racked up. "Congratulations! You smashed 6 cars!," the pit stop greeting proclaims.

THE ACTION

The jump button in Bump 'N' Jump adds an entirely new dimension to the racing game. Flying is a more accurate term for what happens when you find it necessary or convenient to rise above the mundane crowd down on the cluttered roadway. The car elevates, maintaining speed but giving you freedom to soar across the board to land at the spot of your choice. It's the kind of flying sensation associated with weird dreams, Freudian and fascinating.

No other cars share the atmosphere with you when you're jumping. Jumping is another way to earn points, too. When you land on another car, it gets smashed. Amazingly, you survive and go



on to kill again.

Your digital speedometer signals the velocity in the upper left hand corner of the screen. Every race begins at 20 mph, with a top of 220. An eight-directional joystick directs the car left, right, diagonally, forward for faster, and backwards to slow down. Whatever speed is attained can be maintained by setting the joystick in the center for cruise control (a risky leisure to attempt).

At speeds over 100, a "Jump OK" sign flashes directly above the speedometer. If you smash up without using your jump capacity, the sign scolds out a beep. When some obstacle is approaching—a lake or narrow passageway—another yellow warning sign flashes and beeps in advance. Depending upon the level of the course, you may want to leap at the first signal, wait for a last-minute flight, or ignore it entirely and drive slowly and carefully around the problem, if possible.

Certain islands appear in the game. The driver can choose to leap onto and off of them with whatever accuracy he can, or sometimes he can choose to take the slow narrow path along the side. If he opts for the islands, 1000 point bonuses can be earned at certain levels.

Sometimes there is no choice but to jump. In certain levels you are forced to spend a lot of time in the air. Many players, however, choose to stay in the air as much as possible, jumping whenever it's convenient to avoid crashing cars (if they're going for the no-smash bonus), and to avoid careful steering through trees and horse paths.

Every jump loses approximately 30 mph upon contact with the earth, and every up does have its down. That being the case, it would seem that a speed of 130 would be necessary in order to do the necessary double-jump through tricky multiple island terrain. But, if you punch jump IMMEDIATELY after landing, without letting the car lose speed due to friction, you can make an immediate rejump. Eventually, this method slows down too, and you have to race along the ground to regain speed.

THE STRATEGY

Jumpin' John (that's you) has to maintain a fairly high speed. Slow drivers with careful steering may have a crack at crashing more cars (which seem to multiply like fruit flies, materializing out of thin air), but there is too little control when travelling under 100.

Slower speeds are sometimes necessary. The more accomplished the player and the higher the course of play, the greater the necessity to pay very close attention to the speedometer. A jump triggered at 220 might overshoot and land the player in the Atlantic, while tricky side-to-side leapfrog jumping done at 150 might be just the requirement for a finished course.

Once you've caused any other car to smash, try to smash as many others as possible, particularly the death's heads and racers. There is no fuel limitation or time restriction in finishing a course, so maintaining a safe competitive speed—trying to stay closest to the center of the roadway—will give you the best advantage for slam-driving.

One high scorer initialized the number one spot staying within only the first three levels, merely by bumping as many cars as possible and driving defensively through the familiar patterns.

Make use of the narrow one-lane paths. If, while flying above, it looks like you don't have enough oomph to land on the other side of the island, veer over and skid down to the narrows. This will save you more than once. If, however, you get stuck behind a dump truck going 55, you might find no way out of becoming part of the roadside rubble.

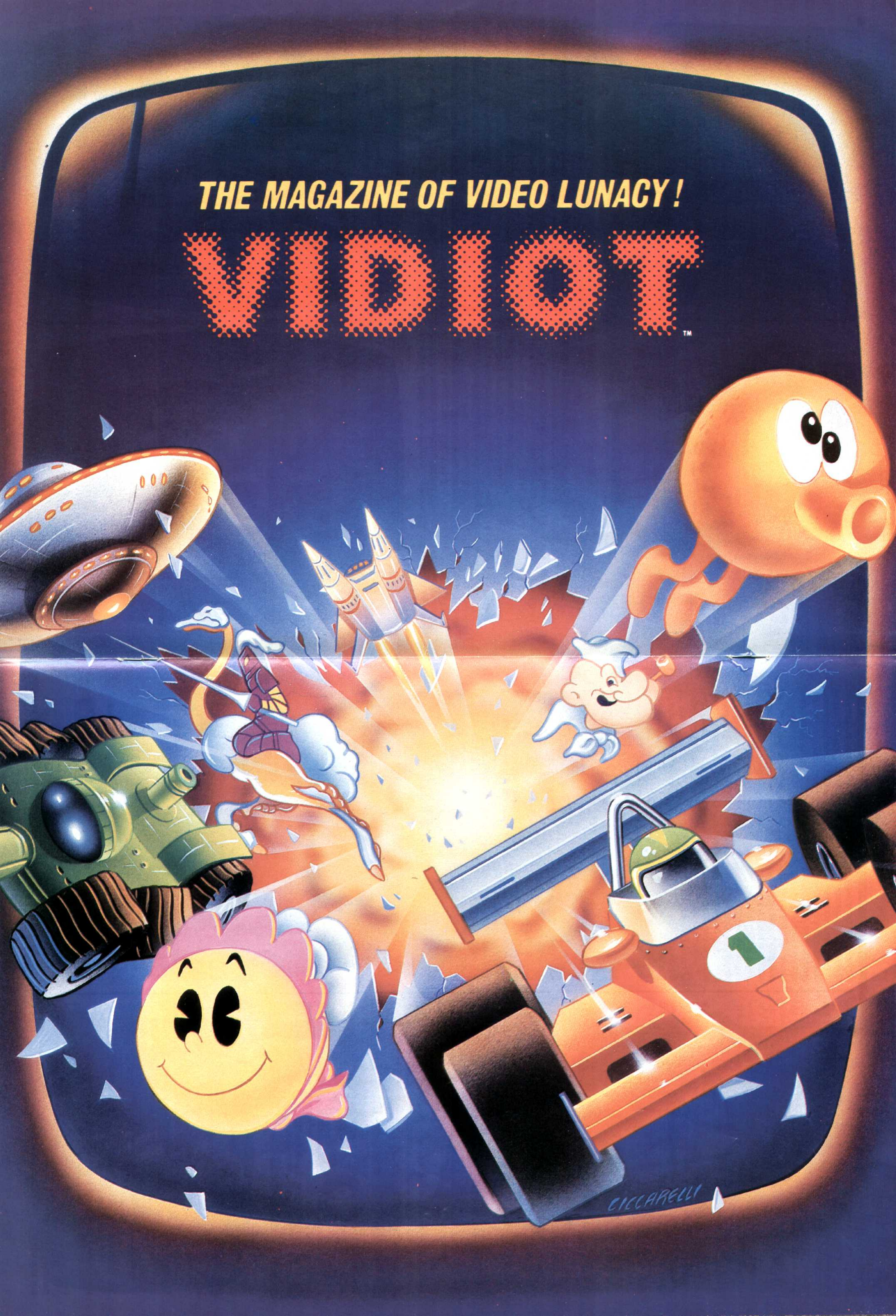
Watch out for the race start. It happens fast, and a crash-up can occur before you've got your bearings. If you're trying to avoid smashing any cars, your game can be shot in a blink. In some patterns, the 8th for example, your car begins in a narrow wooded strip, sometimes directly behind a dump truck. You must accelerate from 20 to 100 quickly, without crashing into the sides, and then jump free of the obstacle.

Bump 'N' Jump signals a return to the basic, simple control game. It can be learned quickly, and mastered somewhat easier than learning to play the piano. The jump button allows for strategies not available in single control games, although no contortions or using your nose to hyperspace are necessary either. Pac-Man made its mark on the world by combining ingenuity with one single control mechanism. Uncomplicated but involving. Bump 'N' Jump isn't simple-minded; just simple. It mixes road fever with the fun of flying. No speeding tickets. No skyrocketing insurance rates.

BUMP'N JUMP
BUMP'N JUMP

THE MAGAZINE OF VIDEO LUNACY!

VIDIOT™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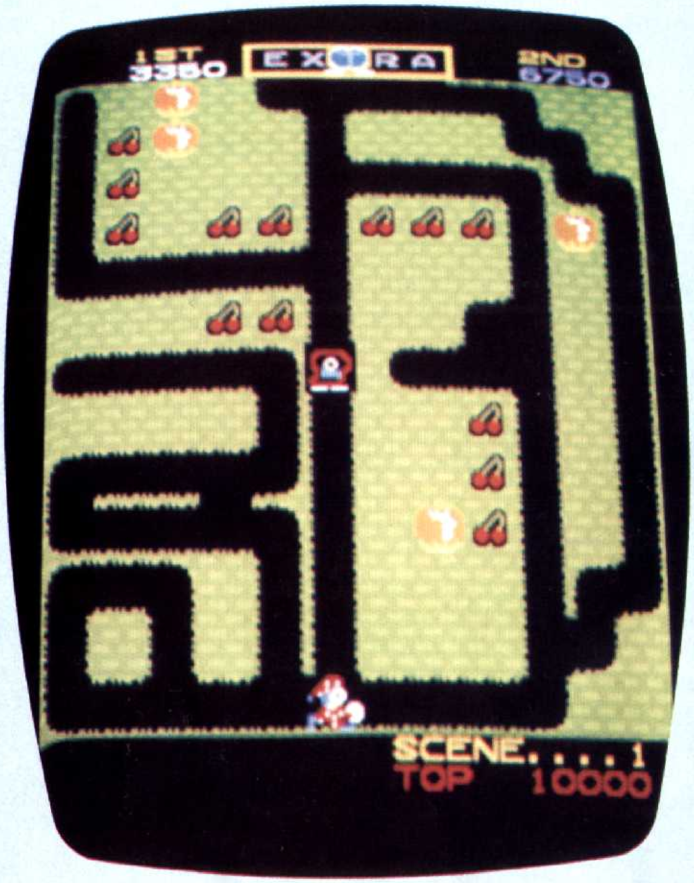
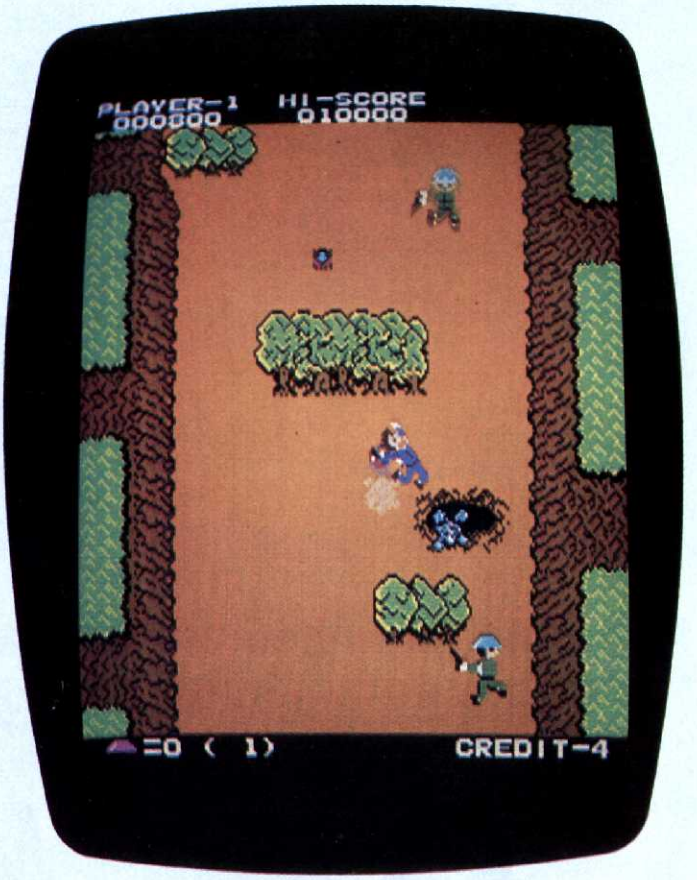
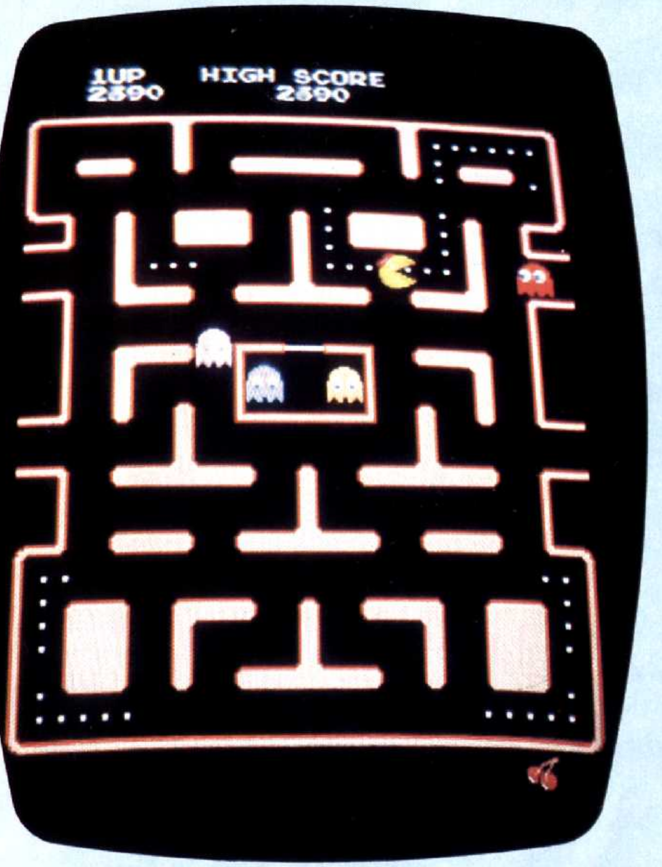


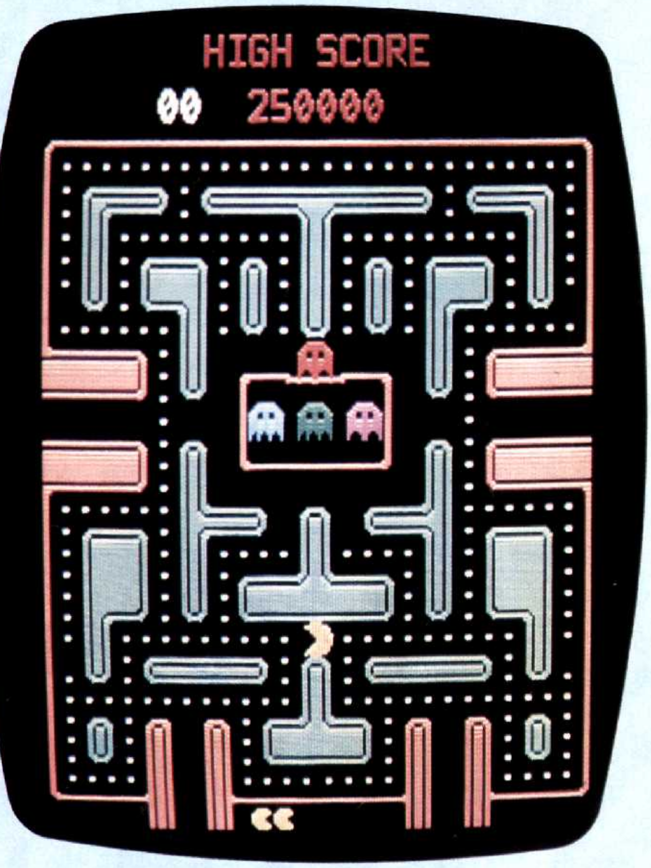
MR. DO—Welcome to the strange cosmology of Mr. Do, a magician with a penchant for plucking cherries and dodging the Sir Isaac Newton apple. If he does get clobbered by the falling fruit, he spins uncontrollably, lands on his head, turns into a mortal, and swears a tiny square word. This Dig-Duggian maze game has several variations, including a Krull-like flying frisbee which the Do tosses at his enemies. It bounces off the sides of tunnels until it destroys something, then it returns to the chewing magician. When he snarfs up the bonus appetizer in the center of the screen, out come big blue munchies, the only characters capable of eating right through the apples in pursuit of Mr. Do. Because no one but Mr. Do can dig the tunnels, and no one can escape from these self-made paths, it is up to the player to create routes that land the bad guys beneath the smashing apple. Either a burrower or a lander be.

Mr. DO!
UNIVERSAL



FRONT LINE—How's your body count? This unhealthy game gives the player a workout; three arms would help tremendously. While aiming and firing with the click knob in the right hand, you must also maneuver your lonely soldier with a left-handed joystick, around obstacles, away from boulders, and through neatly sculptured shrubbery gardens. War is hell, neatly trimmed. With the third control button (located to the right of the right-hand knob), unlimited grenades can be pitched in the direction of the gun. They blow up the enemy, tanks, boulders, but not ugly shrubs. Look out for snipers hiding within. Your rifle fire, amazingly, can stop oncoming bullets, but if misaimed you'll simply kill the opponent at the same time he shoots you down, and both soldiers on the screen writhe in a leap of death and collapse to the dust. Where are the reinforcements? Forget it; you're on your own.



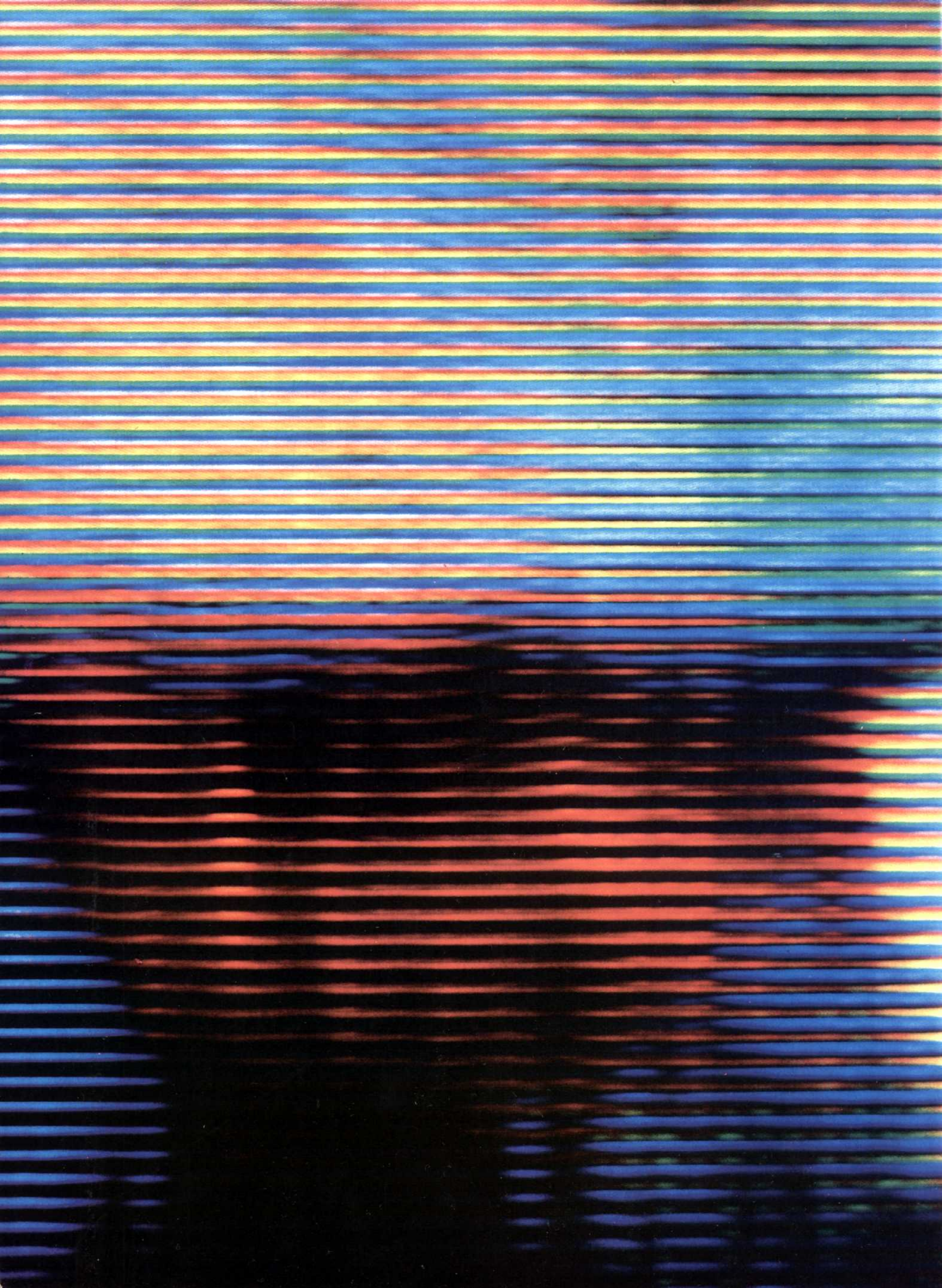


MS. PAC-MAN—What is this old girl's first name, I wonder? Barbara? Joanne? Raquel? She may be coy, but she gets around, you've got to give her that. In spite of eating habits which would make even a Beverly Hills dieter queasy, her pursuers are persistent. Blinky won't give her a moments rest, Pinky may be fey but he wants to go all the way, and Inky may be stinky but he wants to hold her ribbon. As for Sue, she's as ardent as the rest, even though we don't like to talk about it. Fruit and pretzels have certainly made Ms. Anonymous Pac-Man popular. Also kind of, well, round, wouldn't you say? Maybe it's those little yellow and pink pills she keeps popping? It's an addiction, I'm sure. I've seen her go to every corner on the block for just one more, that sleazy lady.

BABY PAC-MAN—The kid's alright. Because he's underage, the ghosts are merciless in their attacks, the lecherous beasts. But, pacifier and all, the littlest Pac-Man learns his land legs on the pinball machine, just like the rest of us did. It's a simple (and short) arrangement: If you spell out his surname by punching flags, you win much-needed energy dots. You can also get them by battering another ball trapped inside a semi-circle loop. If you flipper through the left-handed lane, you spell out "fruits," which then appear on your video board. If you flip through the right enough times, you'll open up video tunnels. When you lose the ball, it's back to basic maze. Every Baby in the game is allowed one crack on the pinball training ground, but you have to crawl through an escape tunnel in order to initiate it. Since the video board is a hard road to handle, it's recommended to start flippering as soon as possible, and let the videogame come back to you later. You have to roll before you wrangle.

MS. PAC-MAN
MS. PAC-MAN

BABY PAC-MAN
Bally
BABY PAC-MAN
BABY PAC-MAN



YOU CAN SEE IT, BUT YOU CAN'T HANG IT ON THE WALL

Smart dance club is visited by the ghost of Marlon Brando's lap!

Debra Trebitz/LGI

Rob Markovitz

BY ROB PATTERSON

If I were to say to you "video art," you might just say, "Huh?"

After all, in our video-inundated world, there's very little that's artful about the most common video forms—things like *All My Children*, Calvin Klein commercials, Ms. Pac-Man, *Facts Of Life*, Duran Duran posing anywhere on the planet, and anything hawked by George Plimpton, for a quick sampling.

For all the informational potential of video, it largely remains an entertainment medium with a commercial thrust. And that's despite what PBS may suggest of their programming, or the fact that you may feel *Leave It To Beaver* is one of our great cultural events. But that isn't to say that what's art—and what's video art to boot—can't be entertaining or have a certain commercial appeal.

The coming of the video age has brought about artists who are employing television and video as working tools and subjects. There's a good chance you may well have already *seen* video art, or at least its residual effects, and not even known it. It crops up in varied places—in museums, as one would hope, but also in pop cultural outlets like MTV, USA Network's *Night Flight*, maybe your local rock video club—and you've no doubt felt its repercussions in the looks and style of television itself. But if the notion of "video art" still sounds enticing but...a bit *odd*, don't expect any easy answer as to what it is.

Video art will be the entertainment of the future.

In Search Of Video Art

It's not hard to find video art in New York—there are museum collections, centers, artists and showings galore—but when you find it, it remains an elusively defined medium. For instance, the New York rock club Danceteria, as part of its "supermarket of style" attitude toward events, recently screened a video program of art tapes selected as part of the 17th Annual Independent Filmmakers' Exposition, put on by the Brooklyn Arts and Culture Association. The patrons, mainly young adult rock 'n' rollers, seemed somewhat interested yet also *confused* by just what they were seeing. And for good reason.

The program's first few highlights were anything but similar: 15 minutes of colorized, abstract multi-images by Shalom Gorewitz, the leader in that area; a documentary-interview tape with two suburban sisters who talk about their favorite pastime, bowling; a Warholian study of a ferry slip which slowly explores the subtle changes in light and shadow; a disjunctive 17-minute "war fantasy"; and finally, a masterpiece—"Song Of The Street Of The Singing Children," by Californian Kenn Beckmann, a five-minute visual and aural symphony coordinating the quirks of barnyard poultry with a scintillating keyboard track by pianist "Blue" Gene Tyranny. It was as musical and amusing and thought-provoking as the best song, show, portrait, sculpture I've ever seen. *That,* I said to myself, is video art. But so was everything else.

"There really isn't a definition," says Lori Zippay of Electronix Media Intermix. They're a non-profit organization that maintains a collection of, says she, "tapes covering a wide range, from early pioneer archival half-inch black and white guerilla video, like the Ant Farm and Guerilla TV, which was very anti-television and anti-commercial, to the early conceptual work from the art world, which one can definitely see as art tapes, because they have nothing to do with television. We have documentary tapes; there is work strictly done with computers, synthesized, abstract images; humorous tapes; tapes experimenting with a new narrative; tapes strictly done for the fun of it... There's so many different types of tapes in our catalog that are still somehow defined as video art." But she explains that Intermix, who lease tapes to cultural institutions, TV and private individuals, like to keep their definition broad. (There are also video environments, installations and sculptures, exploring TV and space as well as time and image.)

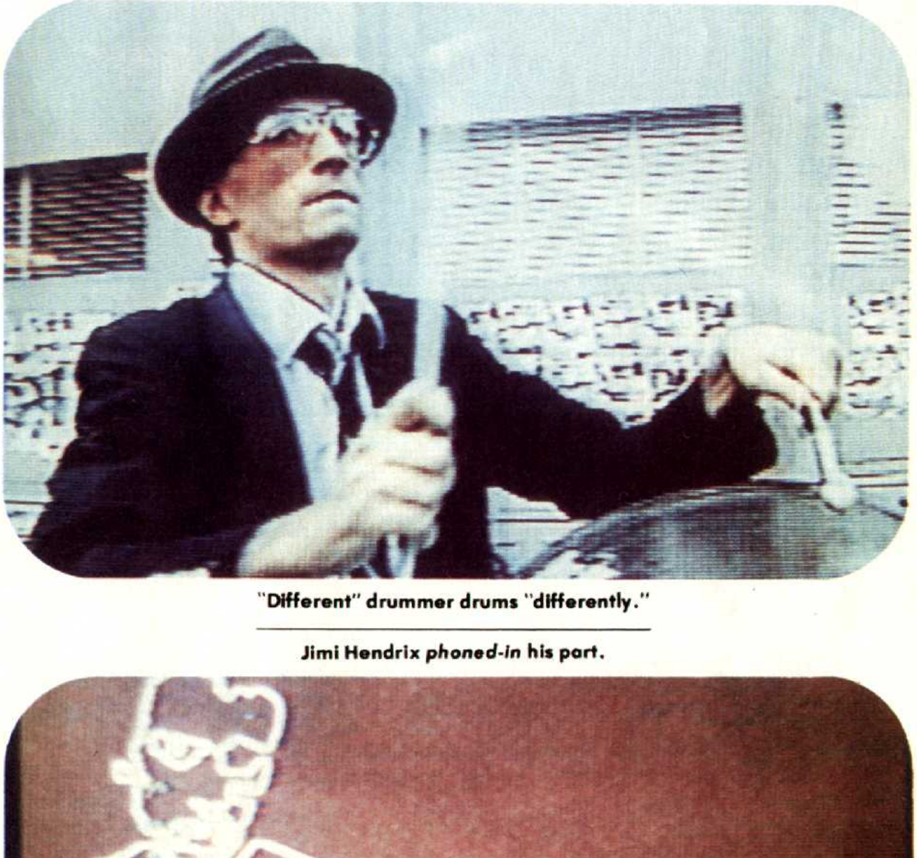
"We like to think that it's work that's experimental in nature, that's creative, that falls outside the realm of commercial television, though it could be shown on commercial television, but is not made with that in mind. Work that..." she pauses, "has an independence."

One of the most independent and exciting figures in video art is John Sanborn, a New York artist whose work with fellow artist Kit Fitzgerald has explored a multitude of styles within the video art world. He reinforces Zippay's notion of intent. "I like to think of it as the difference between work that is made commercially and work that is made for completely different reasons—for the sake of creating something new." Yet Sanborn—who no doubt is an artist—has work that's been shown on both public and cable TV, and isn't sitting in some artist's garret as he explains this, but in one of New York's most sophisticated and high-priced video editing facilities.

Ed Steinberg is a commercial videomaker who creates tapes for bands like the Bongos, Polyrock and Tom Verlaine through his Soft Focus Productions, and distributes music tapes to clubs, record stores and schools via Rock America, his video pool. His definition of "what is video art"

Soft Focus Productions

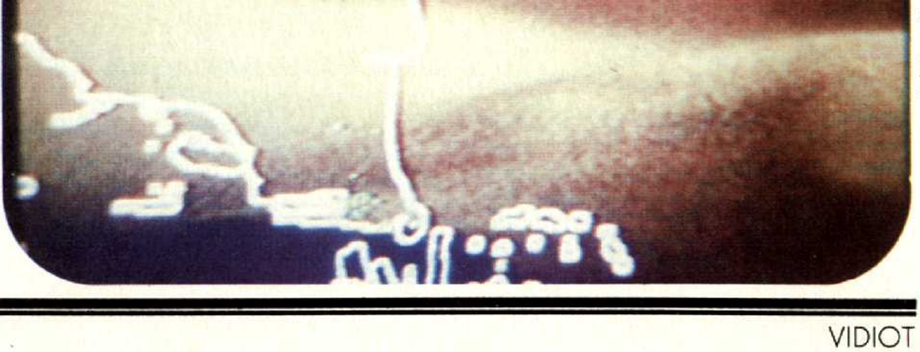
This is what *people* look like to shadows!



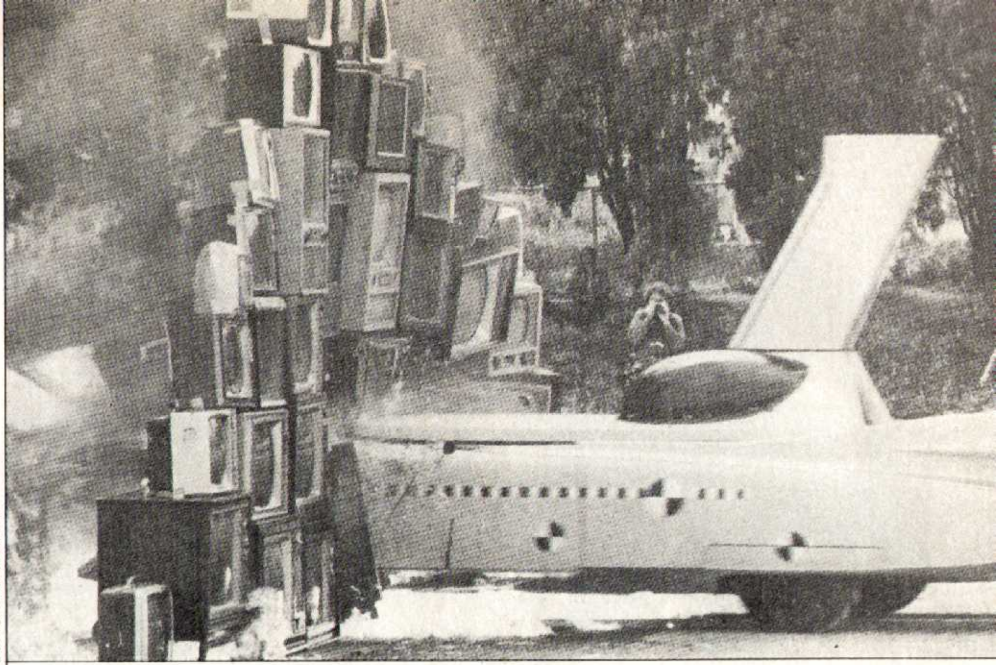
Electronic Arts Intermix

"Different" drummer drums "differently."

Jimi Hendrix *phoned-in* his part.



Soft Focus Productions


Electronic Arts Intermix

Ant Farm celebrates America's TV addiction.

betrays some of his feisty, independent businessman's cynicism.

"I have music videos I've done that have been shown at the Kitchen [a New York art space and center], in a retrospective at the Whitney Museum, at the Pompidou Center in Paris and other museums in Europe. *I* don't consider them to be video art, but they are considered that...there are people thinking it's art. It tickled me, but, fine...I get the $25,000.

"Where is the cut-off point between art and a good commercial clip? I don't do video art pieces; I don't make video art. But I do things like image processing, which video artists do.

"Look at something like the Talking Heads video, *Once In A Lifetime*. Is that art? *I* consider it art, but it's really a commercial promo clip. *Genius Of Love*... Is that art? It wasn't intended as art; it was intended as a promo clip.

"As an ex-art student, I look at the intention. If you do something intended to be art, it's art, within rather wide parameters. But then there are guys who do industrial work, like Bob Giraldi who does the Pepsi commercials; who do visual things that are far more sophisticated than your Soho video artist ever imagined."

So again, what is video art? Is it amazing, thrilling new images, or is it anything outside the ken of commercial TV? Or is it an attempt to create a whole new means of expression?

A Little History

Video art, as it is, effectively started when the Sony Porta-Pak put the tools of video within the grasp of the average person during the late '60s. The Porta-Pak and Sony's half-inch black and white line of recorders, editing decks, cameras and outboard effects equipment meant that, for a few thousand dollars, you could have a crude but effective home studio to make your own tapes. Two groups seemed to seize the potential of it—artists already working in a variety of mediums, from canvas to sculpture to performance, and political and philosophical radicals. The output from both was often too polemical, overwrought, and downright boring. But from the art world came one visionary, Korean Nam June Paik, who certainly created one unforgettable image in his 1973 *Global Groove* tape—cellist Charlotte Moorman playing Paik's "TV cello," an instrument with video monitors hung over her nude breasts. The implications in that image challenges what you may think about TV, sound and music, and any number of other notions. With that work and his many other tapes and video environments, Paik became known as "The Grand Dada Of Video Art" for his vigorous exploration of the potential of video to change how we see and perceive things.

The other persistent image from the early days of video art is the Ant Farm's "Media Burn," a political statement of sorts documenting the driving of a futurized Cadillac through a burning wall of TV sets, commenting on the relationship of America's addiction to television and automobiles. Where Paik set out to create, the Ant Farm set out to destroy—in this case, TV's communicative bond.

Since then, video artists covering the range explained above by Zippay have—with varying success—toyed, explored and played with the notion of television and its technical and emotional potential. Meanwhile, in the commercial world, the cable boom has created a glut of outlets for new programming, and the home video revolution has put TV even more squarely into the lives and minds of America. But shall ever the twain *meet*, and will the video art become something, like the other art mediums, that modern America will know and appreciate?

Can America *appreciate* video art?

The Art Of Video

One way video art's effects are felt by the public are in video graphics and effects—the high-tech combinations of images, split-screens, manipulated images, which is what many people think *is* video art. Such image making and manipulating devices *are* utilized by certain video artists to sometimes astonishing ends, but such devices also fashion some of the most visually *boggling* commercials you will see.

The night I visit Teletronics in Manhattan, John Sanborn and Dean Winkler (a fellow video artist) are, well, playing...sort of, with the possibilities of a just-installed device: the ADO or Ampex Digital Optics, the first computerized video component that can place, turn and flip images in a 3-D spatial plane. The piece they plan to apply it to is a Philip Glass work, specially edited, called "Act Three" from his new LP *The Photographer*.

Winkler, who is also Teletronic's"Mr. Wizard,"—and designed their editing facilities, says about such devices as the ADO (which was in part designed by one of his college roommates): "They build these boxes, then we give them the *reasons* to build them." Tonight, that means manipulating little globes of geometric patterns they affectionately call "Jizz Balls," which, with gracefully coordinated rhythm, form, pulse, spin and dance to the strides of the Glass piece. The patterns, strangely enough, were simply cut from paper and taped; then they were colored, multiplied and formed into balls electronically. Sanborn has to chuckle as he sits in the multi-million dollar facility, explaining, "The funny thing is, it's all made of nothing, just bits of paper."

But what Sanborn and Winkler make from bits of paper and electric energy often ends up being adapted by the smarter commercial and industrial videomakers. One instrument in the studio—the Quantel—is an image manipulator that Sanborn and Winkler used in their video for Adrian Belew's "Big Electric Cat," (shown on MTV), literally making big electric cats glide down the screen into a hallway in almost 3-D perspective. Quantel uses that as a demo reel showing the machine's capabilities. "We find that rather amusing," observes Sanborn,perhaps a bit sarcastically.

Kit Fitzgerald and John Sanborn on location for "Olympic Fragments" in Lake Placid.

Kit Fitzgerald/John Sanborn

Sanborn's work has won him numerous critical accolades, various grants, including one from WNET, New York, to create video art for the channel, and even now a burgeoning reputation as a fine, exciting maker of promotional clips such as "Cat" and King Crimson's "Heartbeat." While his work does enter the commercial realm, he still feels he is creating, in some way, art.

"What I do and why I do it are very much linked. I'm not just trying to do a job and do it right. It's kind of an investigation—to try to do something different, try to create new visual images, a new visual language. *That* is my job. I don't advertise in a trade magazine that I do something different so I can sell you car wax. The fact that I do something different is what I *do*, what I need to do, and why I keep doing it."

But with video clips, he feels he gets "a very deliberate cross between the two. I'm trying to straddle the fence. It's tough to explain how or why, it's a subtle sense...but for instance, Dean and I co-own the "Big Electric Cat" piece with Island Records. It's not work for hire. The fact that it does appear in the commercial zone is part of that crossover. I made it because I *wanted* to make it, but I'm aided in getting it made by that commercial atmosphere.

"What I have in common with other television is that I'm interested in the audience. They're interested in selling soap and numbers; sometimes in cable there's a real desire to reach the audience. I'm selling the ideas and images and the imaging process and how the imaging process is in collaboration with the ideas. The things like the clips are vehicles to prove my point, and at the same time get something that'll work for them."

And the commercial world is aware of the contributions Sanborn and Winkler can make, which is one reason why Teletronics lets them work in the studios during off-time (and at the same time, Nexus, another N.Y facility, has a similar arrangement with Nam June Paik). But how much of the original work will still reach the public?

Video Art & The Future

While the technical outlook for video art is bright and flashy, Intermix's Lori Zippay sees a dark cloud as public funds supporting non-commercial video are cut. More and more colleges and museums are collecting and studying video art, and while it hasn't hit the three big networks, it *has* infiltrated the video culture.

The cable show *Night Flight* has a video art feature, and New York's Ritz has a giant video screen over its dance floor that occasionally shows some stunning and artful images. Says Ilene Staples, one of the club's video directors, "the mere size of the screen gets a lot of video artists interested in having us play their stuff," although she finds much of it lacking, including the dazzling special effects work she often gets. "It's like the Joshua Light Show a million times over, but in the end it gets boring."

The technical outlook is bright and flashy.

But with genuinely good pieces, they are often able to coordinate them to the music, "which is a great way of taking a mainstream audience, and showing them things they won't see otherwise. And they don't have to stop *dancing*, too." But, alas, such outlets might be lost as companies start selling ad time on the club screens.

The conjunction of music and video has always brought to the best concepts to video art all the way from Paik's *TV Cello*, to one of his latest pieces, *Olympic Images*, with a Mitch Ryder "Devil With The Blue Dress On" audio background. Sanborn sees the relationship in interesting terms,

"If you like a piece of music and you are involved with a piece of music on a certain level, you internalize it; it becomes part of your *life*, in a way, and you want to hear it again and again. The externalization of that is "humming." The same thing doesn't really happen with pictures.

"But there's images that people *do* identify and lock into—that one picture of the South Vietnamese soldier shooting the Viet Cong in the head; everyone thinks they have a picture of the Titanic sinking, with the ship going down and the lifeboats, even though there's no real pictures of it. That touches the raw nerve that music is always trying to deal with.

"What I'm interested in is a series of pictures linked with music—or *sound in order*, which is basically what we think of as music, that you must see again, that you can internalize in a similar kind of way. So the only thing I can think of is, what is *visual* humming? What are the keys to visual humming? How can I produce that effect and get that response and desire going on in people?"

"Antarctica," a Sanborn/Fitzgerald "on-going piece," explores that in collaboration with N.Y. musicians like David Van Tieghem, Peter Gordon, Jill Kroesen, and Rhys Chatham. One piece, "Ear To The Ground", is a simple enough video, following Van Tieghem around the street as he drums with mallets on the sidewalk, light-poles, etc. But the image and the musical content are unforgettable, and a new music and language is found in the piece.

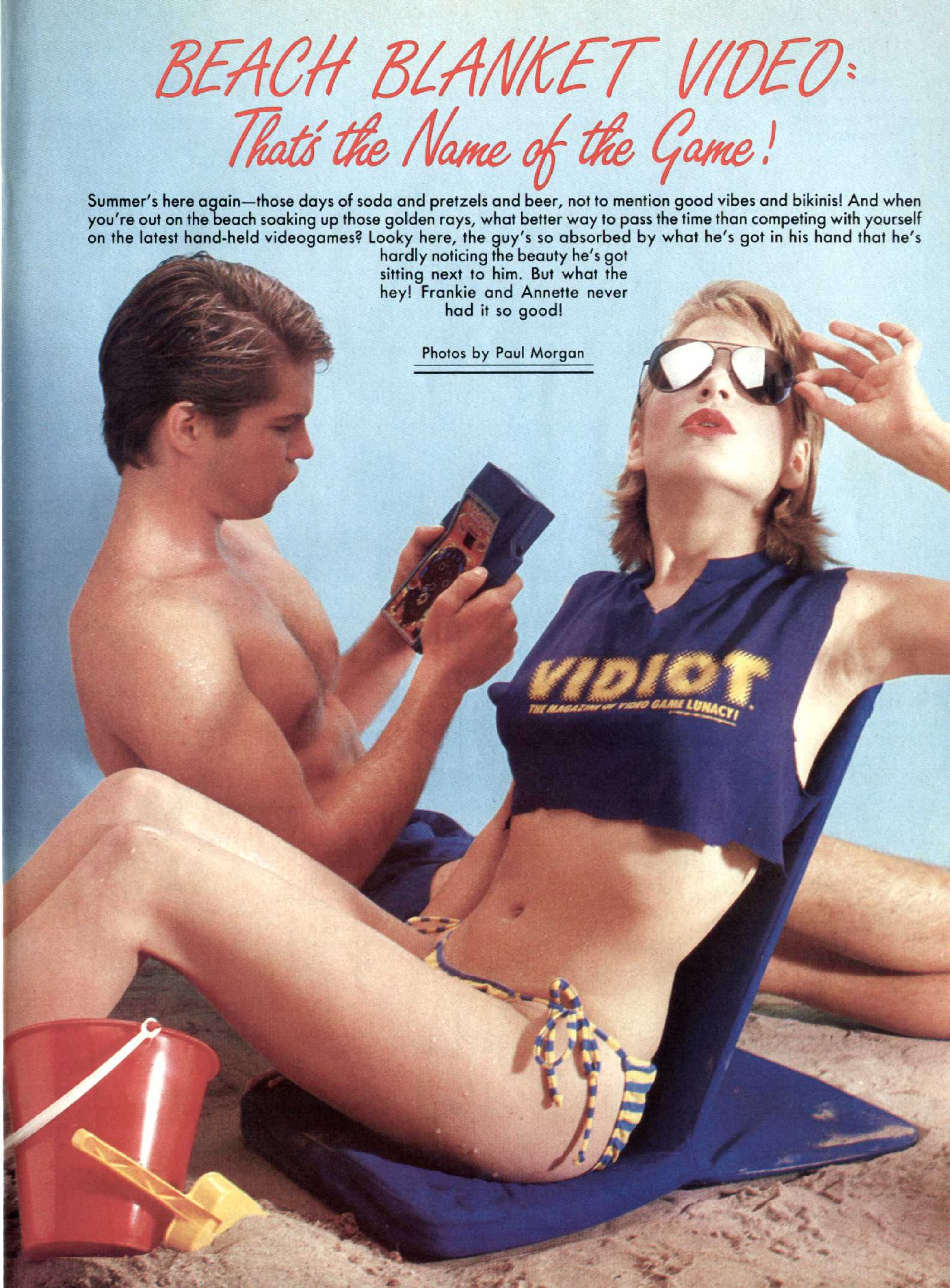
While many might feel that video art may be the sort of medium that will remain in that left-field real art always occupies, Sanborn feels that the future of TV is in the new language that video art is creating. "The stuff on MTV right now is almost at a critical mass level. I know little kids who do not like the stuff at all; they know how to identify a dumb picture."

After the burnout, Sanborn sees the successful use of the video medium as "a new synthesis of a series of things—sound, image, technical capabilities—that will be the entertainment of the future." So if you're looking for a brave new world, turn on your set and open your eyes. (*For further information about Electronics Art Intermix's tape services, write: 84 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011; special thanks to Merle Ginsberg for her help on this article.*) ■

BEACH BLANKET VIDEO: That's the Name of the Game!

Summer's here again—those days of soda and pretzels and beer, not to mention good vibes and bikinis! And when you're out on the beach soaking up those golden rays, what better way to pass the time than competing with yourself on the latest hand-held videogames? Looky here, the guy's so absorbed by what he's got in his hand that he's hardly noticing the beauty he's got sitting next to him. But what the hey! Frankie and Annette never had it so good!

Photos by Paul Morgan


VIDIOT
THE MAGAZINE OF VIDEO GAME LUNACY!

''That Frogger! What a joker!!'' Looky the summer fun you can have with the latest in portable video!

She looks cold and he feels bold, but Ms. Pac-Man never seems to grow very old! Don't it make you feel good!!

Make-up and
Styling by
Linda Castillo,
Joe Blasco
Cosmetics;
Special Thanks
to It's The Ritz
and Dē Zanella

"Swim?!? You gotta be kidding when I'm having this much fun!!"

Thomas Weschler

WATCHING EVERYTHING THERE EVER WAS

BY DREW WHEELER

Television taught me just about everything. If I wanted to be a bigot, I could pattern myself after Archie Bunker. If I wanted to be a consummate hipster, there was Maynard G. Krebs, or if I wanted to be a snivelling creep, there was Eddie Haskell. Aside from shaping my personality, television brought me the most powerful images of our time—events of such global significance as the war in Indochina, the first moonwalk and the Beverly Hillbillies going to England. Well, let's just say that among our household's appliances, the TV set had 'em all beat by a mile.

I'd heard tell of the Museum of Broadcasting from time to time. I'd heard that it was really a *library* of TV, that they had an unlimited catalogue and—this one really got me—*they left all the original commercials in*. I'd heard plenty about the Museum of Broadcasting, but like a prospector being told that the mother lode is just over the ridge, my enthusiasm was generally tempered with skepticism. "They leave the commercials in? What else is there, chocolate fondue? A private audience with Milton Berle?" Yet beneath the surface, and not very far at that , my imagination ran wild. I wanted to watch it *all*. I wanted the episode of *You Bet Your Life* when one of Groucho's housewife-contestants was a pre-showbiz Phyllis Diller, I wanted Soupy Sales telling his pint-sized apostles to go into their parents' wallets and take out the pieces of paper with pictures of presidents on them and mail them to him, I wanted that "Watch Out For The Other Guy" traffic-safety spot where the unsafe driver virtually mows you down in your own easy chair...good God, I wanted to watch it *all*. I wanted to see Lenny Bruce on the *Tonight Show*, when Steve Allen was the host. There was no end to the possibilities. The Museum in my head swelled to monstrous proportions: I wanted to see Fidel Castro's historic meeting with Ed Sullivan, I wanted to see Betty Furness host an atomic explosion, I wanted to see Billy Graham interviewed by Woody Allen...

There was no yellow-brick road leading up to the Museum of Broadcasting, but I found it all the same, just off Fifth Avenue at 53rd Street. One of the pleasant ladies behind the front desk will charge you $3 if you don't have a membership, which costs $30 ($20 for students and seniors). A 63-seat auditorium, used for video exhibitions, takes up the rest of the ground floor. Upstairs there's a smaller screening room, which they refer to as a Videoteque, where other exhibitions take place. Farther upstairs is the card catalogue, which can summon up around 6,000 television shows and 10,000 radio shows that date back to 1920. Over 2,400 radio scripts are also on file there. To see (or hear) what you've chosen from the card file, there are two rooms of viewing consoles. And that's all there is to this tightly-run little archive.

The Museum of Broadcasting was founded in 1975 by William Paley, Chairman of the Board of CBS. This makes him Chairman of the Board of the Museum of Broadcasting as well, other members including NBC chief Grant Tinker and ABC biggie Frederick Pierce. Fritz Jacoby, head of public relations for the MB, told me that one-third of their money comes from Paley and the rest comes from the three networks and group stations. The Museum is a non-profit enterprise. Every year, each network offers around 300 hours of programming, from which the MB takes about half for its permanent collection. Fritz Jacoby says of the programs in the Museum: "It's not just the best or the most distinguished—it's a sampling." Since the MB is a place where you can watch the Kennedy-Nixon debates one minute and *Charlie's Angels* the next, that would *seem to be the case*. Still, criticisms have been made that the collection is quite CBS-heavy, given the founder's association with that network. An unscientific survey of my own seemed to bear this out, with NBC in second place, ABC in third, and fewer programs from PBS than any of the others. Of course the MB is only eight years old—better representation among the networks will have to come about over a period of years.

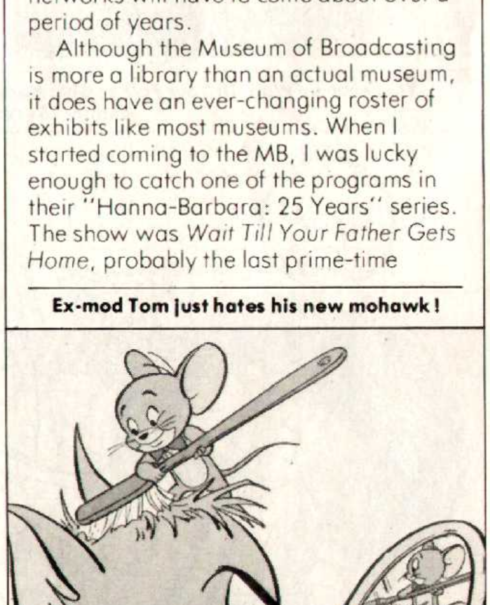
GRANNY FOR QUEEN
GRANNY
FOR

Robert Matheu Atrocities

...But when the votes were tallied, Rick Johnson won.

Although the Museum of Broadcasting is more a library than an actual museum, it does have an ever-changing roster of exhibits like most museums. When I started coming to the MB, I was lucky enough to catch one of the programs in their "Hanna-Barbara: 25 Years" series. The show was *Wait Till Your Father Gets Home*, probably the last prime-time cartoon, one that essentially brought the Flintstones and the Jetsons into the present-day as a modern sitcom family. The Hanna-Barbara exhibition began with their earliest *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, *Quick-Draw McGraw*, *Pixie and Dixie*, *Yogi Bear*, *Johnny Quest* and *Huckleberry Hound*, which was the first TV-cartoon with no live-action host. *The Flintstones*, which ran from 1960 to 1966, is the most revered of all Hanna-Barbara shows, and is also remembered along with its spinoff, *Pebbles and Bam-Bam*, which featured Sally Struthers as the voice of Pebbles and Jay North as the voice of Bam-Bam. The exhibit covered such recent hits as *Scooby-Doo* and *Pac-Man*, which, along with the other cartoons shown, have entered the museum's permanent collection.

Ex-mod Tom just hates his new mohawk!



©1983 Hanna/Barbera Productions

The one exhibit to which I dedicated the most time was "Sid Caesar: Master of Comedy." (There *was* a Muppets exhibit on at the same time but I felt that in 1983 we've heard quite enough from the Muppets, while Sid Caesar is still a pretty rare item.) Over 30 years of Caesarana was there to see, including the classic "From Here to Obscurity" parody from *Your Show Of Shows* with Sid as a supersonic test pilot whose plane is so fast that he lands an hour and a half before he takes off. Caesar also had a prodigiously talented writing staff, including Mel Brooks, Woody Allen and Larry Gelbart, and equally adept co-stars Imogene Coca, Carl Reiner and Nanette Fabray.

One previous exhibition was an extensive Bob and Ray retrospective, which ran the gamut from their earliest radio broadcasts to television

LONNIE
CHERYL
DON
LINDA
MOOCHIE
SHARON
CUBBY
TOMY
DARLENE
ANETTE

Hi! And we're going to grow up and write for *VIDIOT*!

appearances starting in 1951 up to 1982, chronicling the lives of such memorable characters as Wally Ballou, Mary Backstage and Jack Headstrong, All-American American. With B&R appearances on *Ed Sullivan*, *Dick Cavett* and the *Tonight Show*, the exhibition even featured their hysterical version of Rod Stewart's "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?" from a 1979 *Saturday Night Live*. Shown throughout the series were Bob and Ray commercials, the very first "soft-sell" ads like Bert and Harry Piel that blazed the trail for humor in advertising.

"Disneyvision" was a month-long tribute to the Magic Kingdom on television, and while spotlighting some less-than-stirring Disney fare such as *Flash, The Teenage Otter* and *Chico, The Misunderstood Coyote*, the series also touched on *The Mickey Mouse Club* and award-winning cartoons like "Duck For Hire" and the wartime short, "Der Fuhrer's Face." A 10-year retrospective on Home Box Office was shown a few months ago, including musical specials by Diana Ross, Elton John, Bette Midler and George Jones (with Elvis Costello among his guests). Comedians like Steve Martin, Lily Tomlin, Robert Klein, the Smothers Brothers and Robin Williams were also a part of the series, along with the "Thrilla in Manila" '75 Frazier-Ali bout. As is generally the case, exhibition material becomes part of the MB's catalogue.

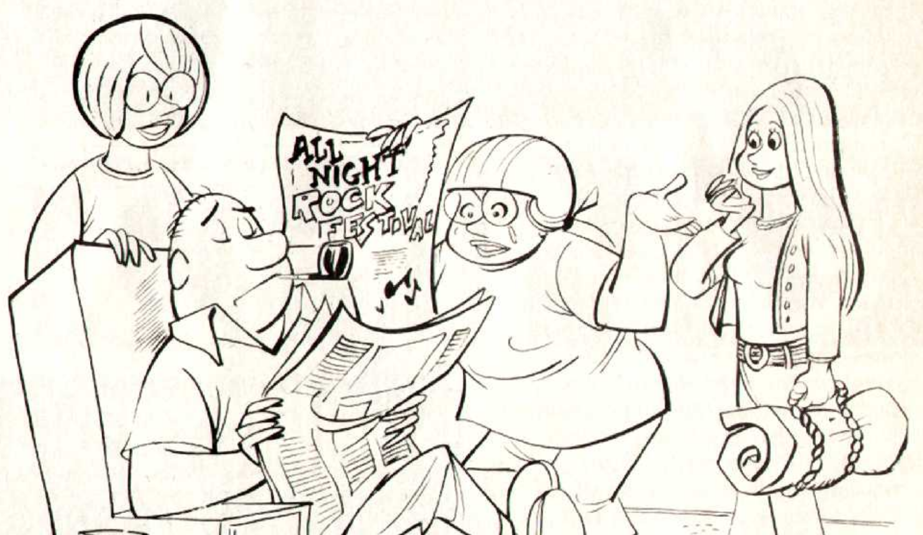
But I wouldn't kid myself into thinking that the exhibits were what I came to the museum for. I wanted to watch it *all*, remember? All I had to do was let my fingers do the rifling through the MB card catalogue and come up with a living blast from the past. Just fill out a card, and leave it with one of the friendly and informative librarians. You'll be told how long the wait is for a console. The heavier the video-traffic, the longer the wait—but the Videoteque downstairs is a room easily slipped in and out of, and nothing kills the time like a few episodes of *Ruff and Reddy*.

The video console rooms are extremely clean and well-designed. With headphones clamped over their heads, each viewer plugs into their own solid-state oracle. The MB staff insists on handling all the tapes themselves, so you can just sit back and enjoy.

My first choice was a dim memory, a weekly rock 'n' roll ritual known as *Hullabaloo*. The guest host of this 1966 broadcast was Barry McGuire, getting what mileage he could out of his recent hit, "Eve of Destruction." Brenda Lee and Barbara McNair were the obligatory "square" pop singers, whom I found myself ignoring in 1983 as I did back then. The "minor" act that day was the Kingsmen, who played a snippet of "Louie Louie" then "Money," surrounded by caged go-go dancers. The "major" act that day was a considerably younger Rolling Stones—featuring Brian Jones. But an even more telling harbinger of youth than the boyish Jagger immediately followed: it was an ad for the omnipresent Clearasil. ("*Why are these Ohio teenagers hiding half their faces?*") I had been reunited with a slice of my past life, and I remembered it just as it was. In the words of one Ohioan: "I couldn't wait to try Clearasil on the other half of my face!"

Any video archeologist will take joy in tracing the career of Ernie Kovacs, justifiably touted nowadays as the first "video artist." The high-flying Kovacs, who later died in a car crash, was probably TV's first diabolical genius. He

Yes, even on *Wait 'Til Your Father Gets Home* did one have to deal with the violence of mid-'70s rock 'n' roll.



©1983 Hanna/Barbera Productions

employed every technical gimmick available at the time, such as dissolves splitscreen and superimposition—sometimes gratuitously, but generally to a powerful effect. One splitscreen encounter showed how simple yet successful Kovacs' sketchs were: one half of the screen is a shot of the studio audience, the other half is a shot of two goldfish bowls; Kovacs and an unidentified actress do voice-overs as the fish in the bowl, ad-libbing caustically about the people they (and we) see in the audience. Did they really try stuff like that way back in '56?

Another comic rarity that I couldn't pass up was *The Woody Allen Special* which aired n September of '69, featuring Candice Bergen, the Fifth Dimension and—I kid you not—special guest star Billy Graham. It was a spectacle of democracy in action: confirmed agnostic Woody Allen asking the best-known evangelist in the world things like "What's your favorite commandment?" In a later sketch, Allen plays a sort of magic rabbi who converts a socially inept debutante (Bergen) into an intellectual by teaching her to say things like "*Elvira Madigan* was a beautiful film to look at, but it was *visually* disappointing."

Of couse, not *everything* is good for a laugh. The April 5, 1955 installment of *The Morning Show* on CBS featured an above-ground detonation of a 40-Kiloton atomic bomb hosted by, you guessed it, Betty Furness, the Queen of Television (as they then referred to her). Covered with all the gusto of an Olympic game, there were reporters in the trenches near the blast site, reporters commenting on what terrific breakfasts those Civil Defense guys can whip up, and reporters wondering about the future of "Survival Town," a community of 10 houses peopled by mannequins due for a rather hot time in just a few minutes. Army personnel stationed around the blast were ordered into the dust cloud to "check" the effects of such weapons under battlefield conditions—who would've thought some of these men would end up battling cancer and the government as a long-term result of this test?

One of my last choices turned out to be one of the single most requested programs at the Museum of Broadcasting, but I'm not at all ashamed of my lack of originality. The night was Sunday, February 9, 1964 and the Beatles were making their first U.S. appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

Certainly anyone alive then was watching it, as I was, and the impact of seeing the Fab Four live on TV crystalized the already-rampant Beatlemania in our suburban household. Yet in 1983 my goal was different. Of course, this was the Beatles' first hello to America, but *who else* was in that charmed lineup?

Imogene and Sid whistle the Maxwell House Coffee jingle.

Aside from a comedy magician and an acrobatic troupe whose names escape me, that show featured perhaps the worst impressionist of all time, whom Sullivan introduced as "The brilliant impressionist, Frank Gorshin." Far more palatable was actress Georgia Brown, appearing with the kids from *Oliver!*, a Broadway hit that year. But still my absolute favorite was Tessie O'Shea, a corpulent music-hall chanteuse in a lame gown, a sort of British Ethel Merman. Tessie O'Shea could've spearheaded the Beatles' invasion if only we'd let her, bellowing out "I've Got Rhythm," telling jokes with a vaudevillian's bouyancy and strumming a midget banjo to her signature theme, "Two-Ton Tessie." (A real *star*, but where is she now?) Well, the Beatles weren't *always* teamed up with such talent—the second Beatles/Sullivan telecast featured Allen and Rossi, Mitzi Gaynor and Myron Cohen. (Ed actually spoke to Fidel Castro for the show a few weeks before, so Mitzi must've been a breeze.)

Life is rough when you're a genius...

One learns, at the Musuem of Broadcasting, that in retrospect everything is much *cheaper* than you remember it to be. This marks the difference between the Museum of Broadcasting and the Museum in my Mind. Ed Sullivan was preparing to introduce the Beatles for their last two songs when he said, "But first, here are some interesting facts about Kent cigarettes..." ■

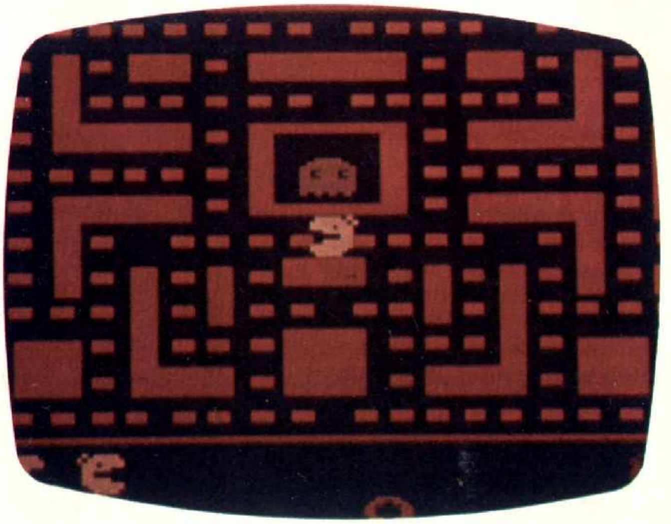
EYE HAND

WHAT'S NEW IN VIDEO

CARTS

MS. PAC-MAN

Atari
(Atari VCS)



Wow! Four changing mazes! Floating fruit, from cherry to banana! A cartoon at the end! It's enough to make the hard-core Pac Fan palpitate. And it's all true, Betty Lou—so how come it's boring?

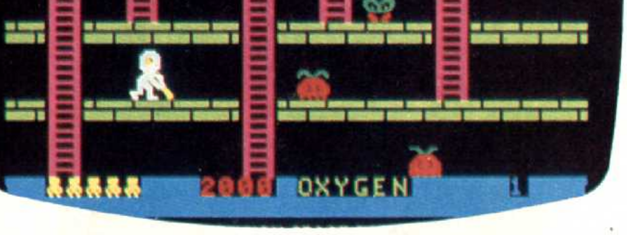
Atari has not seemed to catch on yet that the point of Pac-Man is to 1) avoid the monsters or 2) eat a power pill and catch the monsters. So they give us again, as they did in the Pac-Man cartridge, flickering "ghost monsters" that alternate from blinking to invisible and make the game both annoying and pointless.

Contributing to the problem is the structure of the four different levels of play. The first level, with one "ghost monster," is perfect for two year olds. The two ghost level is great for four year olds, and the three ghost for seven year olds. The fourth and highest play level tosses in Speedy, the red monster. He moves three times as fast as in the arcade version. Between Speedy and the floating, slow-to-turn corners joystick action, level four is too hard while the other three levels are too easy. Improving your game to cope with level four would have to involve being able to see the ghost monsters and is therefore unlikely.

The sound effects of Ms. Pac-Man contribute to the frustration. Although the game begins with a great reproduction of the arcade theme, the sound made when the dots are eaten is the blip, blip, blip from a 1950's robot movie. The sound changes to the drip, drip, drip of a leaky faucet when the power pill is eaten.

The rest of the extras—the four changing mazes and the floating fruit—do their best to add interest to the game. It's all there, and she is "the one and only Ms. Pac-Man." Too bad she turned out to be a one night stand.

Joanne Zangrilli



SPACE PANIC
SPACE FURY

Coleco
(Colecovision)

I would say these games both play like their arcade versions if I had any idea what galaxy the arcades might be located in. I thought I knew a fair share of arcade apparatus but I guess some games just don't get everywhere. So rather than compare 'em to their arcade counterparts, we'll approach them on their own merits.

Which doesn't make it any easier. Take Sega's Space Fury—wanna bet it didn't make big bucks at the arcade for a *reason*? It's Asteroids all over again, basically, and that's one game that isn't too easy to improve on. Which is probably why the arcade Space Fury died the death.

But don't let that stop you. Actually there are more grins than you think here, particularly the first time you play. Go for the easy game option and the first thing you'll see is the face of a green alien with lips moving just like Clutch Cargo's used to. Underneath, a banner flashes a greeting along the lines of "Hello, puny earthling, prepare to meet your doom," and suddenly you're in Asteroids territory, spinning 360 degrees here and there and fending off attacking thingies.

The opportunity for game variation is welcome—after a preliminary blitz, the successful player has his/her choice of one of three "mother ships" to dock with, each of which has a different firing system. It's up to you to decide what you want. After a barrage of three or four different types of attackers, they return all at once, and from then on you work on your skill alone. Your only reward remains the alien's final words upon his return at game's end: "Congratulations, Pal, you've been a ------- opponent," or something like that. The blanks are filled by cutesy adjectives like "laughable" "capable" "outstanding" and probably even funnier ones, the higher your score. In all, thumbs up all the way. While there's no tremendous amount of screen variation after you've met Ol' Greenface, there's enough skill involved in successfully shooting to keep your interest going a long time.

Space Panic? It's "cute," I was told by two women who played it with me, and it wasn't meant as the kiss of death. Fact is, it's another one of those what-arcade-was-*that*-in? games, but this time it's no Asteroids imitation or anything else for that matter, either. It *is* cute.

The premise: you-the-spaceman are pitted against cunning monsters, each of which can kill you upon contact unless you fight back. How? Um...with a *shovel*. Basically, y.-t.-spaceman run up and down a series of girders and ladders while evading the creatures long enough to dig holes in which the unsuspecting beasts are to fall. As they fall, you get points, and when they *all* fall, you get a new screen variation.

They don't *just* fall, though. You've got to use your shovel again to cover them up. And when you *don't* cover them up in time—and it happens a lot—they change color. And then you're got to dig *two* holes, one directly underneath the other, to kill those monsters. And if you don't cover *those* monsters up in time, guess what? A new monster, this one needing to fall through *three* with *five* balls) and Migrating Blocks, which randomly exchange places.

STARPATH SUPERCHARGER

The Supercharger. Sounds a little scary, doesn't it? Visions of jumper cables, stalled Trans Ams, overloaded sockets, etc. Forget it. If a basket wrench like me can handle it, anyone with half a pulse can too. Nothin' to it. You simply slide the Supercharger into an Atari 2600 like it's a long cartridge, plug the connected wire into the earphone jack of *any* audio cassette player (it's not picky like some computers) and you're ready. The program loads from tape to VCS in 30 seconds or less and with a flick of the replay switch, you, the dummy, are in business.

SUPERCHARGE NOW!

What the Supercharger does, basically, is increase the VCS' memory storage by a big 6K (six Kahunas, techically speaking). This makes for much improved, flicker-free graphics and games with much more depth than the typical cart.

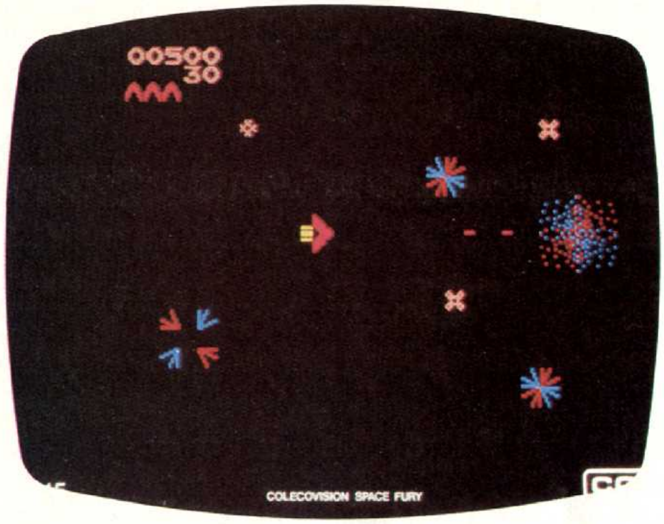
Special features include a wide assortment of options/levels, automatic high score compilation, sneak previews of other Starpath games and Multi Load tapes that further increase play depth.

Here's a quick look at the games currently available for the Supercharger:

- Communist Mutants From Outer Space—No resisting this Galaxian-styled shooter. Just scope these epic instructions: *The evil ruler of the planet Rooskee has launched a cunning Mother Creature, filled with irradiated vodka...You've got trouble*. Yeah, but you've got options too, like shields, penetrating fire, nine level of difficulty and the particularly psychedelic time warp. Ace feature—the player selects any combination of variations, enabling you to "customize" your attack.
- Killer Satellites—Here's an extremely likeable horizontal scroller where you must protect Hometown, USA from the killer sats and eight other types of invaders, including moon cupcakes, enamel chastity belts and the much-dreaded unidentified flying bamboo steamers. Game features 95-100 difficulty levels and you can start almost anywhere. It's also a riot to *crash* your own plane at high speeds. Exquisite, fiery disintegration.
- Fireball—This is the best variation on the Breakout theme yet. You're a fireball juggler with a choice of deflecting or catching the flaming spheres that bounce-off-and-eliminate the blocks/bricks. Each time you wipe out a wave of blocks, another fireball is added, which makes for some real hot juggling once you get past the first ball. Plus five different games: Knock-A-Block (described above), Marching Blocks (rows stomp towards you), Firetrap (two additional balls in block cavities), Cascade (like Firetrap with *five* balls) and Migrating Blocks, which randomly exchange places.
- Escape From The MindMaster—In this Multi Load package, you're stumbling through a series of [illegible] at the mercy of the MindMaster. MM uses several tests to measure your intelligence, ranging from pegs 'n' holes to margarine detecting abilities. The "human's eye view" perspective is real neat and doesn't take much time to get accustomed to.
- Dragonstomper—This is the adventure game for players who don't like adventure games. You roam the Enchanted Countryside, stop in at the Oppressed Village for a burger and some oppression, then duke it out with the Dragon on his home turf. There're some *bad acts* in the countryside: spiders, snakes, golems, demons, maniacs and The Slime. Spiffy, scoreboard-like message block gives you important poop ("OH NO—A SLIME!!!") and play-by-play combat descriptions. Another Multi Load, with separate loads for all three battlefields.
- Suicide Mission—The story line we're asked to buy here is that we're cruising somebody's bloodstream—*Fantastic Voyage* style—tackling the footsoldiers of a Viral Colony. Game action resembles Asteroids, with intriguingly squiggly amoebas instead of space junk. Keep in mind what Perry Mason once said: *"A virus can't be taught, it must be exterminated!"*
- Phaser Patrol—This is the first two-screen space match I've ever been comfortable with. You must have a relatively "handy" difficulty switch, as it's used to change from the Sector Map to Combat Action. The latter features your instrument panel and a sight for blasting the Dracon bad boys. Instead of accumulating boring old points, you try to improve your pilot ranking. I dunno, cleaning up the galaxy seems like an awful lot of work just for a bad review.

On the whole, this gamer is *obsessed* with the Supercharger. It's the most exciting addition to my VCS pile since lighter fluid. The price is down around $40 now in some places, and individual games are only $15. Pretty decent for an *addiction*, I think.

Rick Johnson

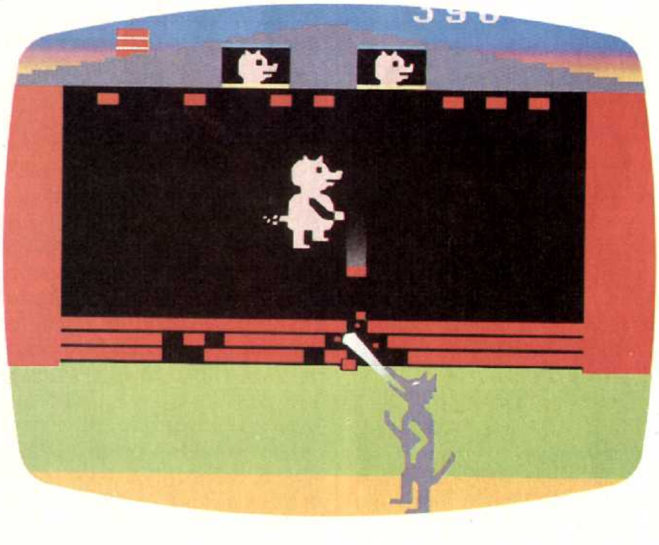


holes at once before you can destroy it.

It's fun. And it takes skill—it's something of an art to get the feel of digging one hole directly underneath another, and there are all sorts of strategies you can fool around with for higher scores. Only problem might be the lack of screen variation, but again that's more a fault of Universal's original than Coleco's cartridge.

In all, both carts show that Coleco is prospering, producing, and doing a fine job of it. Those who are a little bored playing Venture and Carnival—have fun.

Kevin Christopher



OINK!
Activision
(Atari)

This video version of the *Three Little Pigs* is proof that not everything can be improved by technology. It's real cute, the graphics are great, but the action is duller than a dried-out pork chop.

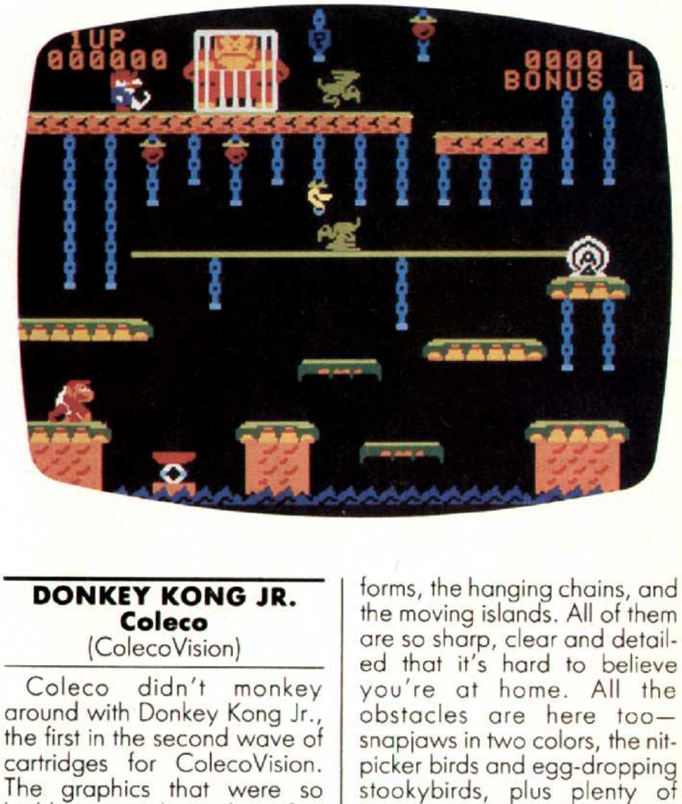
Oink is faithful to the story we all used to beg for at bedtime, except for the exciting parts. The wolf doesn't get boiled and the pigs don't get eaten, so right away the game loses that "life and death" incentive.

Version One—Player as Pig—begins with the sound of footsteps as the pig waddles out into his living room. (Despite the title, there isn't a single snort on the soundtrack.) The wolf walks up outside the house and starts using his laser-like breath to play Breakout with the three rows of bricks that form the house's floor. The pig gets a row of thirteen bricks along his ceiling; a hint of the bad luck to come. The player has to direct the pig up to the bricks, press the joystick button to grab one, and direct the pig over a hole the wolf has made. Release the joystick button and the brick drops down and fills a hole. Positioning the porker is not easy, and if he is not over a hole the brick won't drop—the pig will just stand there flapping his arms.

Meanwhile the wolf is relentlessly huffing and puffing, and when the laser breath breaks through and hits the pig, it knocks the brick out of his hands and drags him down to the floor. If the hole is big enough, it drags him out into the yard and you go on to the next pig, who has been watching all this from an upstairs window. But not until the dead pig gets up, walks back into the house, and leaves the room! Where could he be going? Is there a barbecue pit in the backyard?

Version Two of the game—one player as pig and one as wolf—offers gamers who enjoy sadistic practical jokes a beautiful opportunity. The wolf who is so slick when the computer controls him turns into a hopeless clod who can never stand in the right spot when a human tries it with a joystick. The torture can go on for hours until the unfortunate person playing wolf either succumbs to severe hand cramps or punches the other player in the snout.

Joanne Zangrilli



DONKEY KONG JR.
Coleco
(ColecoVision)

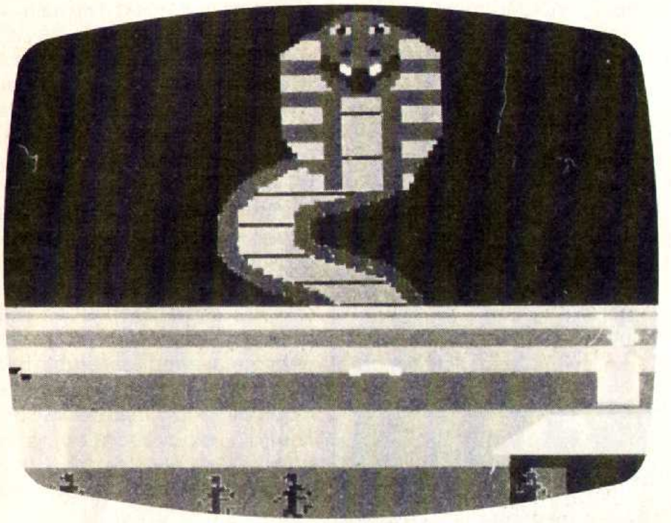
Coleco didn't monkey around with Donkey Kong Jr., the first in the second wave of cartridges for ColecoVision. The graphics that were so highly praised in their first games have taken another leap forward here.

The arcade game embellishments—the girl's wiggling, Kong's foot stomping—were missing from the Donkey Kong home version, although the game play itself was authentic. With Donkey Kong Jr., one of these nice touches is included. In the second rack, Kong breaks out of his cage piece by piece with every key Jr. inserts in the locks. On the last lock, Kong breaks free, leaps up, and smiles.

There are three different screens: the ropes and platforms, the hanging chains, and the moving islands. All of them are so sharp, clear and detailed that it's hard to believe you're at home. All the obstacles are here too—snapjaws in two colors, the nitpicker birds and egg-dropping stookybirds, plus plenty of hanging fruit to clobber them with. The game play and joystick action are excellent. Kong Jr. can leap without a running start, unlike poor paunchy Mario in CV's Donkey Kong.

But it's the graphics that do it all for this game—Jr. looks like a monkey, leaps like one (always with his arm raised in the hope of catching on to something) and even walks like an ape. And if a monkey in diapers isn't the cutest hero of a videogame ever, who is? You can't help but want to get involved and rescue his Dad from the evil big-nosed Mario, hopefully before Jr. runs out of Pampers.

Joanne Zangrilli



G.I. JOE COBRA STRIKE
Parker Bros.
(Atari VCS)

OK, here's the picture: We're doing time at the G.I. Joe training camp. Not such a bad place, kinda small, maybe. Gang showers. The view stinks. But you don't have to get your skull shaved, so how bad can it be?

It can be pretty bad. An "evil" organization called Cobra (Crawl Over Barren, Rocky Anthills? Call Off Big Ronnie's Attitude?) have attacked the camp in order to facilitate their planned world takeover. They can *have* it, right?

Aw, c'mon, that's not the G.I. Joe spirit, little comrades! We gotta take it to these bad guys, whose assault force has arrived "in the form" of a gigantic cobra snake! Pretty symbolic, if you ask me. I'm surprised there aren't any smokestacks or train tunnels around.

This bad Cobra is squirting venom from its fangs and laser beams from its nasty black eyes in a very Kaboom-ish manner. If any of this icky stuff hits one of the recruits, he's either vaporized or beamed up to the snake, Scotty-style. Being up in the slither king is *no fun*. There's nothing to do up there except scrub fangs and tell venomous knock-knock jokes.

Are you, G.I. Joe, gonna let this happen to your poor little soldier guys? Of course not! You're a commando! A lean, mean fightin' machine! And it just so happens you've got a gun that fires missiles. What else ya gonna do, hit the cobra with your hoe? Hoe, hoe, hoe, that's the morale we've got here!

Seriously speaking, though, do you *want* to be the good guys all the time? Rescuing Smurfette, saving Earth from total destruction and playing usher for lady frogs? *Noooooooo way!* That's what's so great about Cobra Strike—you can be the meanies instead!

You've probably seen the TV commercial for this cart. You know, the one with the Jekyll/Hyde, John McEnroe/Brooke Shields announcer? Well, he's right! We all have an evil side! We *like* to stomp centipedes, break out of prison and alienate the affections of that poor dumb ape's dream girl.

In this game, all you have to do is kick the game select switch and you, the paddle-wagger, becomes the cobra! Let me tell ya', if you think roasting recruits with your laser eyeballs is fun, wait'll you cop the sensation of spitting venom on the suckers! It's just too bad they don't shrivel up and die like Spider-Man does when he hits the pavement in *his* game.

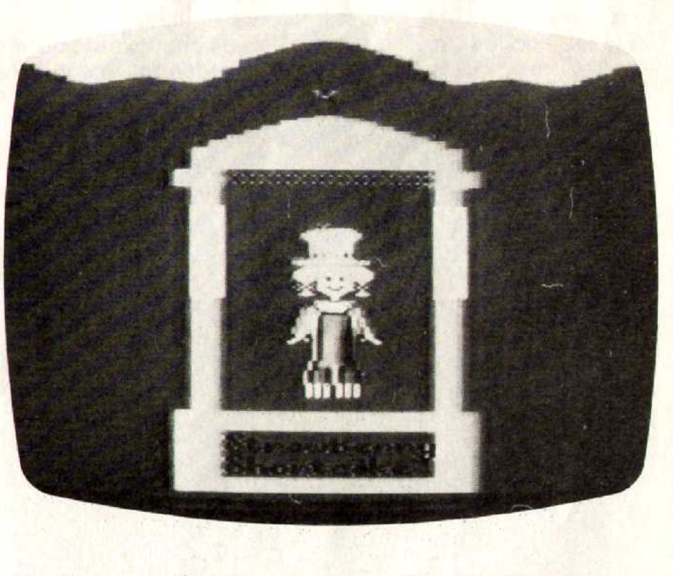
Overall, the variety available in Cobra Strike is a big plus. Your precious little humanitarian side might get torn between the satisfaction of protecting your troops and the pure joy of blasting them into Endust, but hey—what are feelings when you can get points?! If only there was a mercenary level where you'd get paid for it!

Rick Johnson

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE MUSICAL MATCH-UPS
Parker Bros.
(Atari VCS)

Here it is. The one we've all been waiting for. Uncontested game of the year. No...let's say greatest game in videogame history. No, no...this is surely the most fascinating entertainment device of the 20th Century. Ah, why mince words? Strawberry Shortcake Musical Match-Ups is obviously the single most important event in human history.

And yet...it's a game! Many-leveled, certainly, but still an alleged source of fun. And to further throw serious scientific researchers off the track, the package says S'berry S'cake is for ages four to seven! Maybe future historians unearthing the remains of our primitive rec rooms will be better equipped to interpret the scope and impact of this so-called toy.



Here's the specifics. On your screen, you'll see a member of the S'berry cast standing in a perilously cute gazebo. Glenn Ford is nowhere in sight.

After a brief musical intro, you'll see one of the gang, say the impish Blueberry Muffin, all happy and smiling. Only, their bodily parts have been mixed up with those of the others. There stands little Booberry (a mite nervous, but that's understandable), only she's got Lukeberry's denim legs and the Purple Pieman's...uh, *torso*, shall we say?

This confused anatomy—symbolic of American youth?—doesn't just stand there, oh no. It *dances* to its own personal theme song. Or it *would*, but (pleez sit down) the song is all mixed, just like the character!

Hold on a minute! We still haven't introduced the entire cast! Rude City!

First and foremost is S'cake herself, who looks a little like Shirley Temple in a snake-charmer's hat and soccer sox. Her tune is the probable theme song of the Tilt-A-Whirl in a seedy Tuscaloosa amusement park.

Huckleberry Pie wears a straw hat and coveralls. You've seen him everywhere in Collegetown, USA. His name should be Luke. "Satisfaction" in some odd minor key is his number.

Lime Chiffon wears an apparent birthday cake on her head. The life of the party, I'm sure. The rest of her is...*lime*. Quick, the Lime Away! Her Parisian ditty would sound best as the background music in a *Breakfast At Tiffany's* terrace scene.

Blueberry Muffin is highly reminiscent of Annie Oakley in her "blue" period. Her song is "On Wisconsin" done oom-pa-pa style.

The bad guy, Purple Pieman, looks like a cross between Evil McGreedy and Famous Amos, with a violet new wave handlebar moustache. He has the best song, a Cossack hopper that makes you want to shout "Hey!" a lot and jump over fires.

Five of the swellest youngsters around, don't you think? The *Kids From Fame* got nothin' on this group.

Graphics are real sharp, especially for a VCS cartridge. They're very simple, of course, but definitely edible.

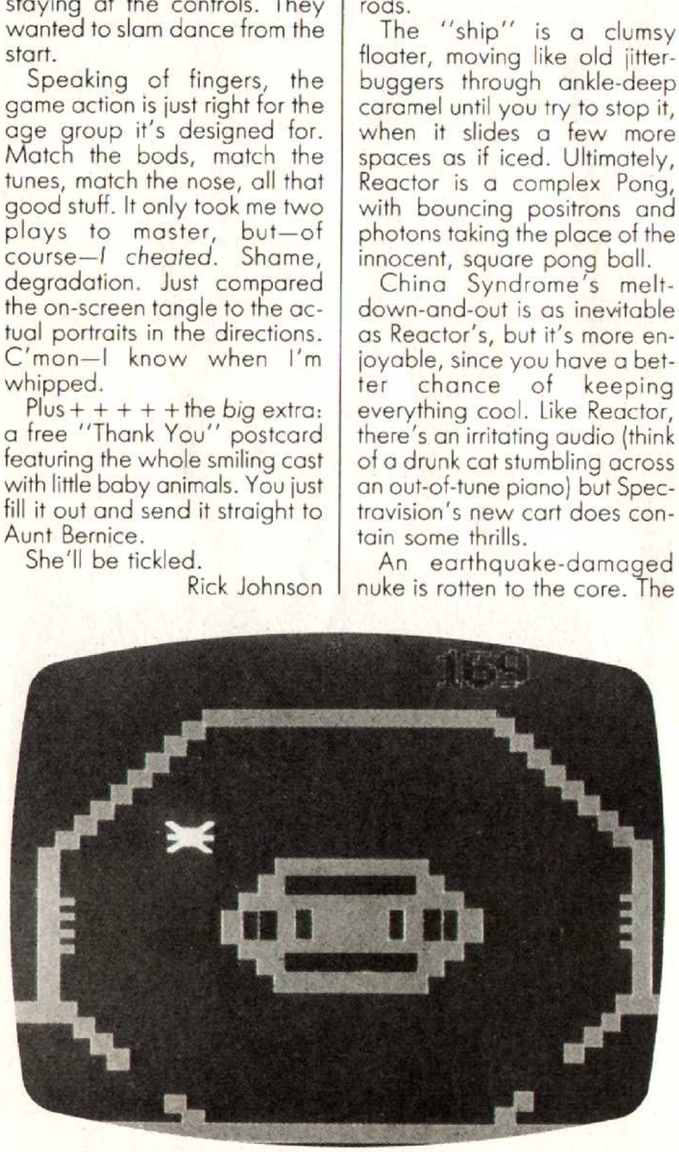
Ditto all the music. This is the first cart where I've voluntarily enjoyed the tunes. They're real crisp, even—dare I say—*sprightly?* My always-mischievous fingers had trouble staying at the controls. They wanted to slam dance from the start.

Speaking of fingers, the game action is just right for the age group it's designed for. Match the bods, match the tunes, match the nose, all that good stuff. It only took me two plays to master, but—of course—*I cheated*. Shame, degradation. Just compared the on-screen tangle to the actual portraits in the directions. C'mon—I know when I'm whipped.

Plus + + + + + the *big* extra: a free "Thank You" postcard featuring the whole smiling cast with little baby animals. You just fill it out and send it straight to Aunt Bernice.

She'll be tickled.

Rick Johnson



REACTOR
Parker Bros.
CHINA SYNDROME
Spectravision
(Both Atari VCS)

In Reactor, one practically expects their skin to tingle with a green glow. The *sound* almost does it, but neither the action nor the graphics are very entertaining.

The player's ship is trapped inside a nuclear reactor's containment structure. With the core going critical, the mission is to stop the meltdown and stay alive. Individual nuclear particles like neutrinos bombard your craft until they or you touch the walls, which represent instant vapor-death. Meanwhile, the interior core grows like an aroused flyspeck, shrinking the safe area needed to work on reducing the control rods.

The "ship" is a clumsy floater, moving like old jitterbuggers through ankle-deep caramel until you try to stop it, when it slides a few more spaces as if iced. Ultimately, Reactor is a complex Pong, with bouncing positrons and photons taking the place of the innocent, square pong ball.

China Syndrome's melt-down-and-out is as inevitable as Reactor's, but it's more enjoyable, since you have a better chance of keeping everything cool. Like Reactor, there's an irritating audio (think of a drunk cat stumbling across an out-of-tune piano) but Spectravision's new cart does contain some thrills.

An earthquake-damaged nuke is rotten to the core. The player must use a joystick-directed robot arm (called a Decontamination-Defussion-Vacuum) to remove leaking fuel particles before a meltdown starts. This fall-out roundup occurs on nine levels of increasing difficulty. It has similarities to Breakout in flames, with added obstacles like steam vents which disintegrate your mechanical arm.

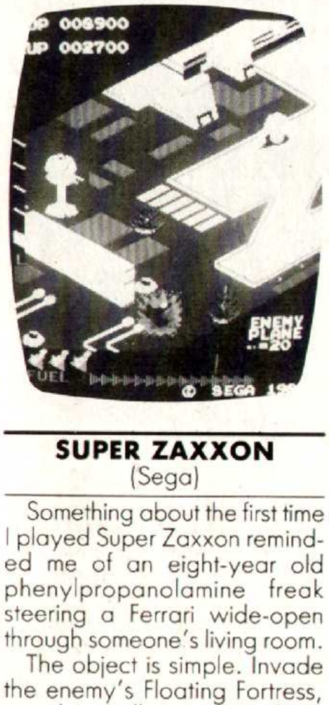
The long and (appropriately) uncontrollable meltdown is depicted as a blood-red sheet that slowly falls until it fills the screen, accompanied by an obnoxious noise that shares common ancestry with dental drills.

Although Reactor comes in a distant runner-up fun-wise, both it and China Syndrome show that you might be able to keep going in a dangerous and difficult nuclear "simulation," but—like real life—you'll never win. You're the Human Element.

And you know how we are.

Bill Knight

'CADES



SUPER ZAXXON
(Sega)

Something about the first time I played Super Zaxxon reminded me of an eight-year old phenylpropanolamine freak steering a Ferrari wide-open through someone's living room.

The object is simple. Invade the enemy's Floating Fortress, avoiding walls, turrets, rockets, space ships, laser barriers, fuel tanks, minelayers, and radar units. Next, fire six volleys down the Dragon's throat before he fries your projectile with his breath. Then repeat the process with minor variations, mostly speed. And watch your fuel gauge if you're not busy.

Super Zaxxon's graphics are more elaborate than its predecessor's, with castle walls from Disneyland and a hexagonal red tile floor from *House Beautiful*. Catatonic gamers could just groove on the colors.

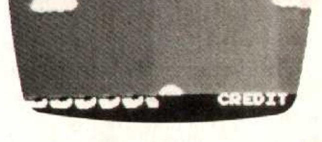
The tunnel action is more dynamic. If you pass under the bridge in the first asteroid, the screen changes and you're hurtling through a passage where enemy ships, swinging like Jello bats, explode on contact and ruin your afternoon. Constantly pressing the Fire button will determine altitude and direction. This will also clear the screen of undesirable objects.

The low point in the game happens to be the encounter with the Dragon, Super Zaxxon. Following three adrenalin rushes in two asteroids and one tunnel, you meet what Sega calls "the ultimate obstacle." The excitement level here is roughly equivalent to having both legs in plaster casts and outmaneuvering an eight-foot slug. The dragon inspires as much awe as a Pez dispenser. The act of dragonslaying is slightly less annoying than hosing blood off the mat between Toughman bouts.

Helpful hints: for maximum points, destroy enemy ships, etc., while they're still on the ground in the first asteroid. Keep your dipstick level up by blasting fuel tanks disguised as soft-boiled eggs on tripods. And follow a zig-zag path close to the ground on the right side. You'll figure it out.

If you mastered the diagonal movement of Zaxxon, you're halfway home. This version's not for heart patients or terminal droolers. The novice Zaxxonite should plan on bouncing off walls for the better part of $2.00 or 10 minutes, whichever comes first.

George Piner



TIME PILOT
(Centuri)

This seemingly simple air combat game is deceptively difficult. The premise is interesting. Time Pilot takes the player through decades of military advances step by step.

But what looks easy from across an arcade becomes Joystick Jitters when the game begins.

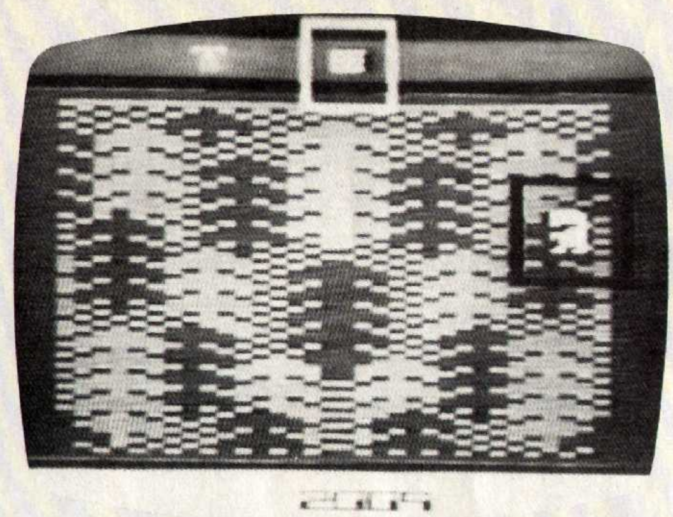
Zaxxon-like graphics depict the player's plane in the center of the screen sky. An aerial dogfight begins against early aircraft, circa 1910. Biplanes attack in formation and singly, shooting guns and dropping bombs like their military budget was bottomless. In fact, there *is* no ground here. No matter how far you dive, you're up in the air. Besides the principle opponent, a larger prey eventually floats by: the zeppelin. When the hot-air dirigible clanks on the screen like some dilapidated International Harvester your Grandpa keeps covered up in his barn, it offers a sizable point bonus and, when destroyed, a gateway to the next stage.

After a nice light show time warp to separate the years, the player is in the middle of a World War II battle against prop fighters and an occasional bomber. As with the first group, the enemies emerge from all directions and come in such numbers as to threaten collisions as well as cannon-fire. If you're successful (don't look at me; the upper 40,000s were my best), Time Pilot visits the near Past, the Present and the Future, facing helicopters, jets, and flying saucers, with various planetoids and "mother ships" cluttering the screen.

The game has an excellent warm-up demo mode prior to coin-drop. Stand and watch—the tips are obvious. Be aggressive; spray a stream of fire as you rotate constantly (you need 56 kills from each stage to keep moving forward). The larger bonus crafts need more than one shot to fall, and they're most vulnerable from behind. Aren't we all?

A few other hints: loop-the-loop regularly, sneaking up on your attacker. Make plenty of right angle turns to elude the slow-moving fire. Don't forget you can shoot an incoming bomb, the quickest exit from Boom Doom. Lastly, stay above the bombs, which drop with gravity (in fact, I prefer to fly straight up, "higher and higher"). The joystick's direction control limits maneuverability, so concentrate on wiping out the attackers, not stacking up points.

Bill Knight



THE ULTIMATE TIP!

How To Beat Home Video Games Vol. 1-3

(Vestron Video)

Trying to pick up good playing tips on home videogames is a thankless, time-consuming task, like deodorizing swings or trying to solve the Italian Dubbers Union strike. It's not like the arcade, where you can play it close to the nose as long as the victim you're watching doesn't turn around and peel you so you'll fit through the coin slot better.

At home, there's nothing you can do but blunder-hack away at an enjoyment level similar to sitting around waiting for paint to crack.

Reading the strategic poop in vidmags can be helpful, but so can learning how to hot wire shrimp boats. And, as for checking out the actual instructions, well, we all know how that works. Either the directions are incomplete or your attention span is, us'n's being hot to *play* the muthuh.

Vestron's *How To Beat Home Video Games* videotapes are such a good solution to the drudgery of learning, there's just no comparison. What could be better than watching the games being played on your own personal TV?

Each of the three volumes covers 20 different games, with a friendly announcer introducing and discussing each game in turn. Besides demonstrating the play action, slow motion and highlighting are used to point out "those super strategies, those little-known tricks and secrets, those techniques that will take you farther into each game than ever before," like the guy says.

Volume I: The Best Games covers 20 well-known VCS cartridges, including Space Invaders, Demon Attack, Pac-Man, Missile Command, Frogger, Asteroids, Defender, Donkey Kong and Atlantis, as well as duds like Barnstorming and Circus Atari. Not only do you get to see *all* the screens (including multi-screen games like Donkey Kong), but also quick flashes of hands desperately clutching joysticks and real kids playing real games.

As the first games are analyzed, you begin to notice things you should've spotted during previous contests or stumbled onto in the instructions. For example, the stupid author didn't realize the diving demons were worth more points than the hovering birdies in Demon Attack, or that the side cannons in Atlantis produce higher blammo.

Volume II: The Hot New Games, examines 20 newer VCS entries, including E.T., Raiders Of The Lost Ark, Starmaster, Berzerk, Pitfall, Riddle Of The Sphinx, Megamania, Astrochase, Space Attack, Mouse Trap, Lock 'N' Chase, Super Breakout, Venture and more. By now, the announcer has loosened his tie a bit and the kids are starting to get a little itchy, squirming around in their seats like they're suffering mass pantyhose crawl or they have to go to the bathroom *real* bad.

The game selection here may be a bit uneven, but the approach remains thorough. Seriously though, I have to admit to leaning on the Fast Forward a bit. I mean, E.T.—why don't they skip the facts and show you how to burn off the little creep's face with rocket exhaust? And nowhere in the Riddle Of The Sphinx segment do they cover the proper dancesteps for stomping the cart into little pieces and then grilling it.

Volume III: Arcade Quality For The Home introduces games for the Atari 5200, ColecoVision and GCE/Vectrex systems, including the 5200 versions of Pac-Man, Centipede, Space Invaders, Galaxian, Defender, Super Breakout and Star Raiders; Coleco's Donkey Kong, Zaxxon, Venture, Lady Bug and Smurfs Must Die; and Mine Storm, Scramble, Rip-Off, Cosmic Chasm, Clean Sweep and Hyperchase for the Vectrex.

By this point, the little guinea pigs are tired and sullen-looking, like they're about to vandalize the announcer's cheeks. Got no complaints, though, as they only get about 45 seconds out of each tape's 60-minute running time. Hey twerps—that's show biz!

How To Beat Home Video Games is a good idea carried out with technical excellence. Picture and audio quality, as well as special effects, are outstanding throughout. The suggested list price ($39.95 per volume) compares favorably with most prerecorded videocassettes and both VHS and Beta formats are available.

"Your scores should increase dramatically," says the host in the intro and he's right, of course. And if you don't want or care about high scores, hey—erase it and re-record old episodes of *Hazel* instead! (Vestron Video, P.O. Box 4470, Stamford CT 06907)

Rick Johnson

VIDIOT writers eagerly await payday.

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Silly Days & Twisted Nights: The Art Of MONTY PYTHON

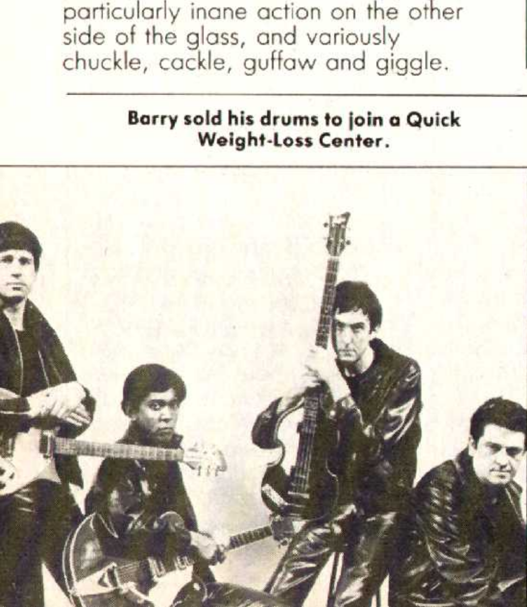
BY TOBY GOLDSTEIN

Somewhere in this wicked world, fish are laughing—peering through the plexiglass of their tanks and enjoying an absolute belly-bouncer about the incredible stupidity of the humanity walking by. Gills softly flapping, they jovially nudge one another, spying a particularly inane action on the other side of the glass, and variously chuckle, cackle, guffaw and giggle.

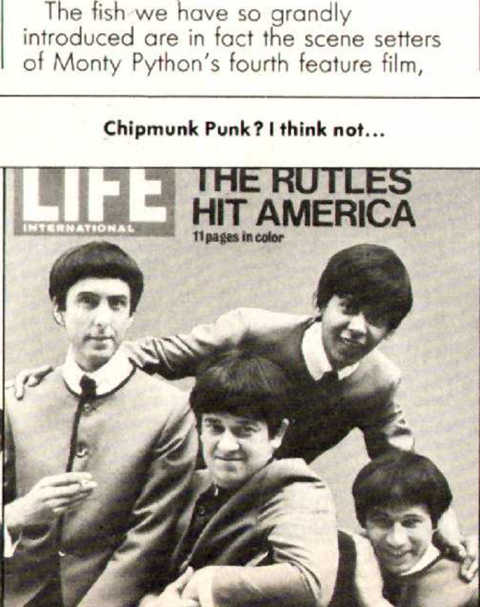
We featherless bipeds are a strange and nasty sort, wouldn't you agree? And don't think that we're about to get away with our stunts for even a moment, because those fish have turned into six very dangerous sharks of the mind, called Monty Python. They're just waiting for us to fall on our collective fat ass, and when we do, they'll deftly slip another banana peel in the pathway.

The fish we have so grandly introduced are in fact the scene setters of Monty Python's fourth feature film, *The Meaning Of Life* (humble title), and one of them, whose slight resemblance to Peter Cook comes mainly from a pair of questioning eyebrows, is sitting in a Manhattan hotel room, lounging around in Japanese-style pajamas. Eric Idle—as well as several other Pythons—has arrived to promote *The Meaning Of Life*, which he readily admits is a natural attention-grabber (these Pythons have no shame). "This is very universal," he declares. "Also put out by Universal [*hohoho*]. Everyone wants to know the meaning

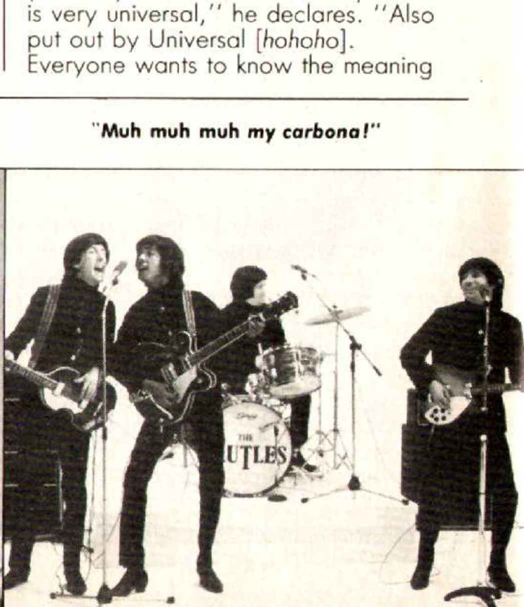
Barry sold his drums to join a Quick Weight-Loss Center.



Chipmunk Punk? I think not...



"Muh muh muh *my carbona!*"



Elmo (third from left) arrived without an invitation!

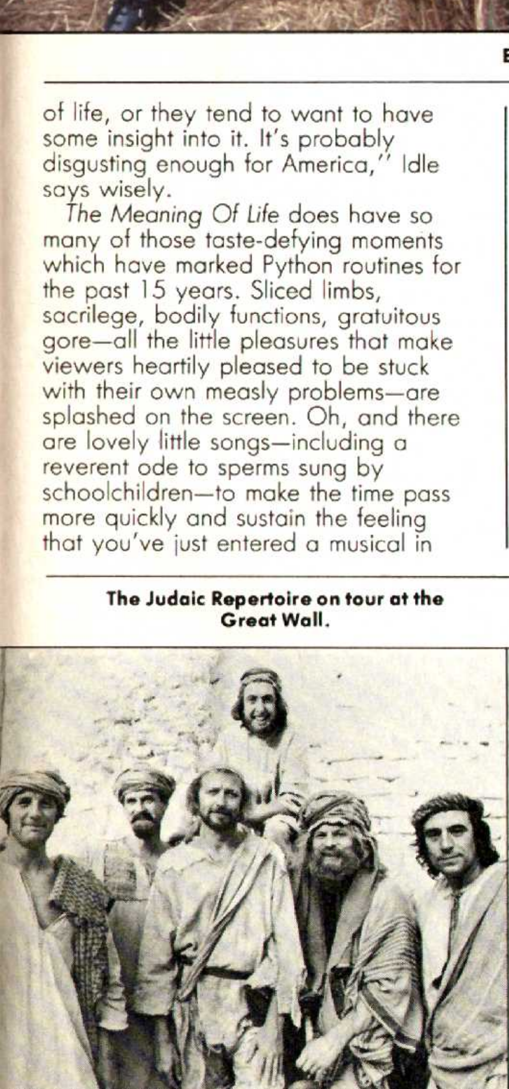
of life, or they tend to want to have some insight into it. It's probably disgusting enough for America,'' Idle says wisely.

The Meaning Of Life does have so many of those taste-defying moments which have marked Python routines for the past 15 years. Sliced limbs, sacrilege, bodily functions, gratuitous gore—all the little pleasures that make viewers heartily pleased to be stuck with their own measly problems—are splashed on the screen. Oh, and there are lovely little songs—including a reverent ode to sperms sung by schoolchildren—to make the time pass more quickly and sustain the feeling that you've just entered a musical in the lower depths. Whether you will indeed be disgusted by the whole shebang, or highly entertained as successive follies march across the screen, depends on you, dear viewer. The Pythons aren't about to concede anything.

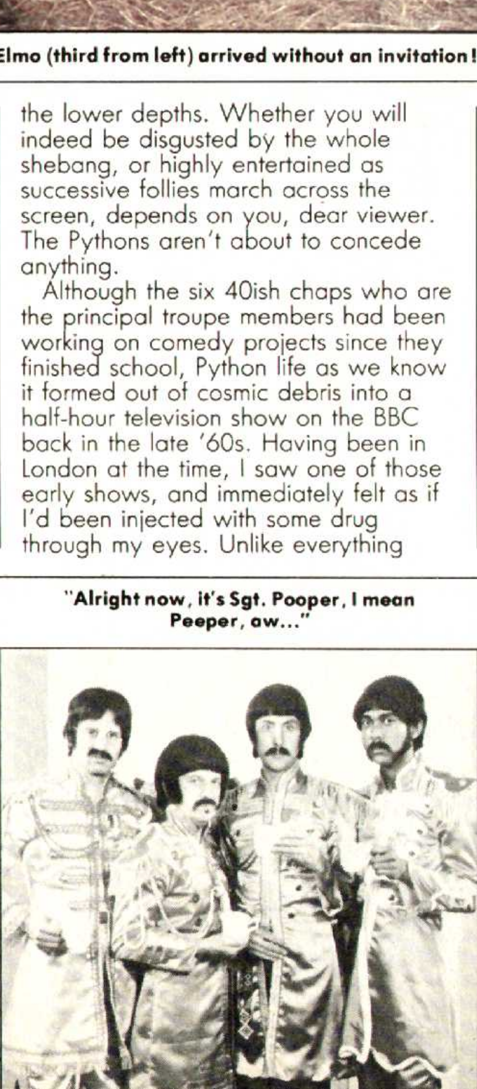
Although the six 40ish chaps who are the principal troupe members had been working on comedy projects since they finished school, Python life as we know it formed out of cosmic debris into a half-hour television show on the BBC back in the late '60s. Having been in London at the time, I saw one of those early shows, and immediately felt as if I'd been injected with some drug through my eyes. Unlike everything else on the screen—before or since—*Monty Python's Flying Circus* didn't have a beginning or an end. There was lots of middle, which occurred in apparently random order. Helter-skelter, animation mixed into pseudo-documentary into song into slapstick. By the time you thought you had a line on one bit, another one, completely different, came along. And nowhere in the chaos was there anyone called Monty, or a python. Admittedly, there might have been one or two paper airplanes in sight, but the last word, ''circus,'' really summed it up.

''I think we hit the technology at the right time,'' Idle fondly recalls of the series. ''We were young enough to be

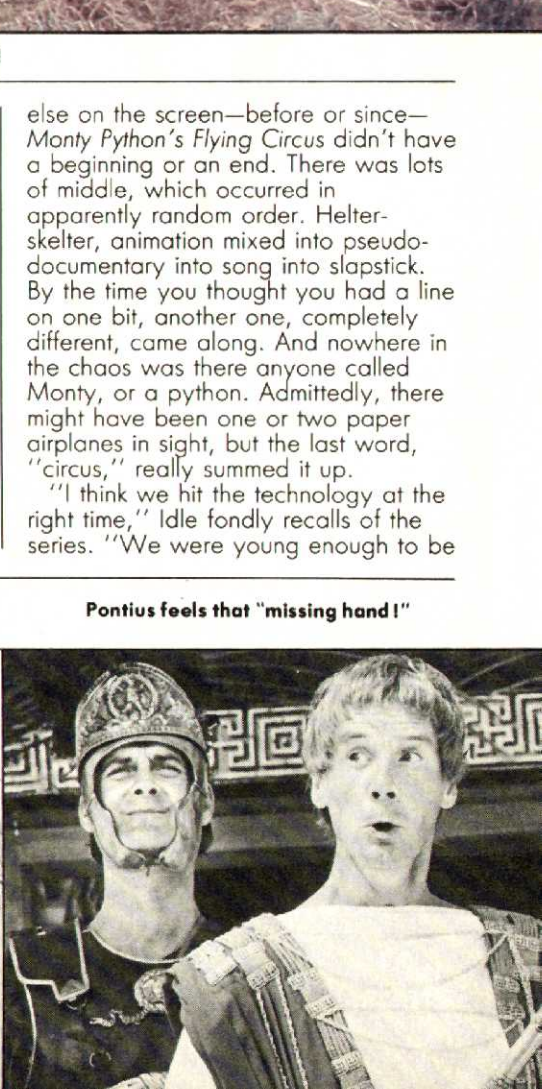
The Judaic Repertoire on tour at the Great Wall.



"Alright now, it's Sgt. Pooper, I mean Peeper, aw..."



Pontius feels that "missing hand!"



Uhhhhh...it's a mix!

St. Nick was never the same!

able to go in there and play with the toys, which nobody had ever exploited, or used for that sort of mad comedy style. They had used it on radio and it evolved into a high art, like the Goon Show, which took it as far as you could get, just using sounds and images. And we were able to translate it, in that half-hour format.

"We created the structure, or non-structure, where we could throw anything in. Nothing would be wasted. If you had a four-minute sketch and only the first minute and a half was funny, you'd only do that; you wouldn't be lumbered doing the whole thing and finding a tag. It's a common condition in comedy," Idle believes. "I've not really seen *Your Show Of Shows*, but it seems like the Sid Caesar stuff was exactly the same sort of thing. I think the only step we took forward was to not even bother to finish off things; we'd just interrupt and segue them and put animation in, to take us out of a hard situation."

If it seems that *Saturday Night Live* has carried on the Python spirit, it's far from coincidental. Lorne Michaels, who created the show, was working at Canada's CBC while the Python TV series was still in production. Observing that, and their first film, *And Now For Something Completely Different*, Michaels knew he wanted to adapt that formula for the American market.

Since then, Idle relates, the creators of a new British series called *Not The Nine O'Clock News* was over here to observe *Saturday Night Live* in production before launching their show. So much for certain assumptions that another country's humor doesn't travel well.

"The humor that has stumbling blocks is the localized humor which depends on product jokes, advertising jokes, local things on the surface level of our culture," Idle explains. "Things that translate are more general—or just plain funny. They switch over quite easily, because they're about behavior and people's obsessions and people's tendency to screw up every perfect paradise. And I think these things are common to everybody.

"The interesting thing was Python's accessibility—it went to 76 countries! Almost because it's simple, paradigmatic humor; anyone can get a laugh out of it because they can translate automatically their own obsessions and hatreds into it. So what the Japanese make of things—it's almost a Zen for them," says Idle, a little in awe of his reach. "It goes to places like Yugoslavia, Nigeria and Hong Kong, and you wonder what people make of it there. They watch it, so let's hope they enjoy it."

Spurned by commercial channels because of the censorship threat implicit in advertising, the Python's natural habitat had to have been that amorphous conglomerate known as the BBC.

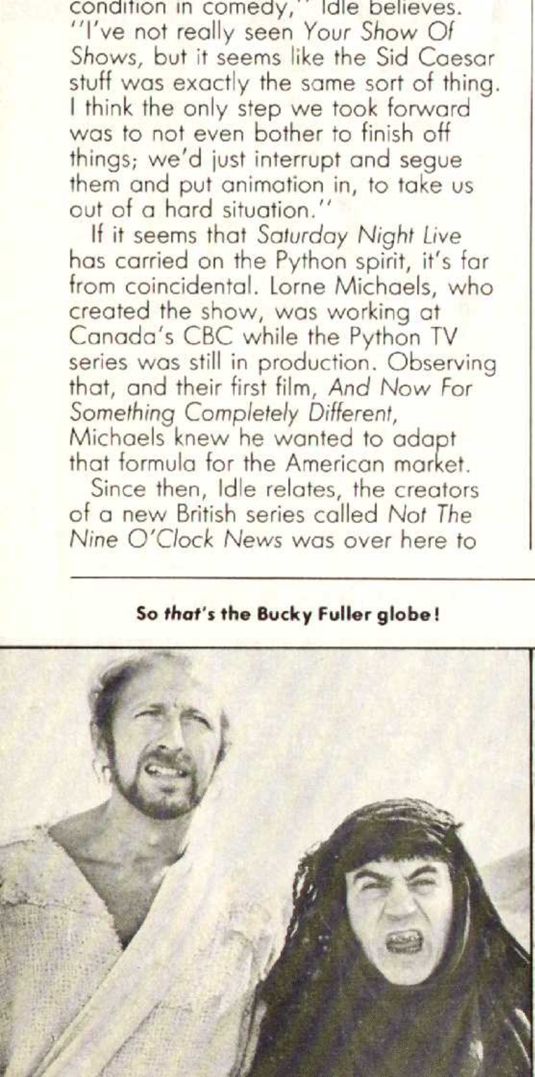
And naturally, when *Flying Circus* traveled to this country, its most appropriate location was on PBS. "We'd have liked it if they'd given us money, but you can't have everything," sighs Idle. Vividly, I remember streets emptying at 10:30 on Sunday nights, when the show was aired in New York. I also seem to recall particularly well-loved episodes, like the dead parrot, or the transvestite lumberjack, being held over our heads like clubs during the perpetual membership drives: "You VILL GIFF us 200 more subscriptions, if you want to see Michael Palin again!" The money would flow in by torrents.

"I think what we're going to do is let PBS have the shows again," says Eric, considerably brightening my day. "We thought about cable, and obviously, we were offered a fortune to go into syndication if we'd cut it and put commercial breaks in. We resisted that, and rightly. I think people prefer the show when it floats through."

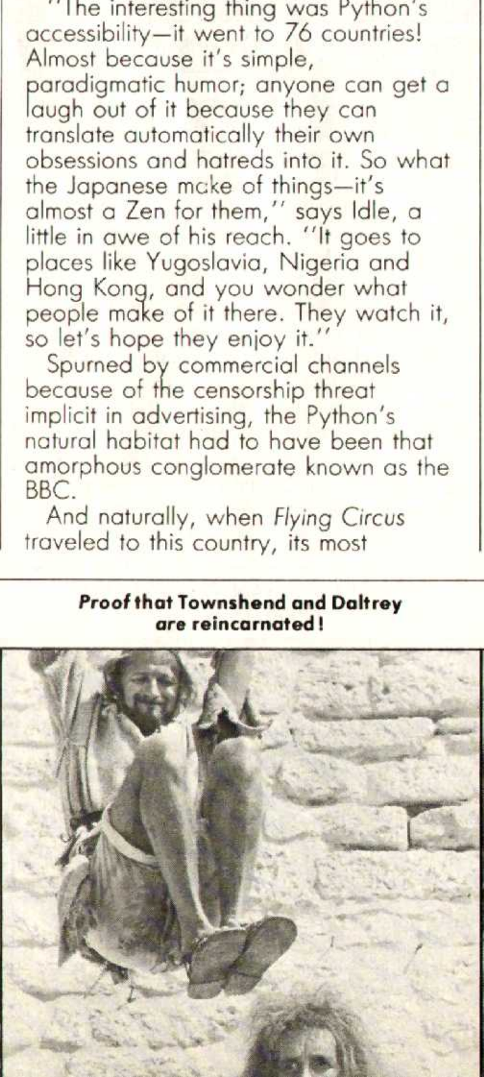
Acting apart from his fellow Pythons, Eric Idle did create one commercial television project. And if everyone will join in on a fast chorus of "Cheese And Onions," I'll tell you what it is. Yes...*The Rutles*! (Aren't we clever.) As so frequently happens when the brain of a Python is going full gush, this landmark of video and musical history sprung out of an ongoing Idle project.

"I was doing a show in England called *Rutland Weekend Television*, which was somewhat similar to *SCTV* in that there was a tiny television station with no money. Neil Innes (of the late

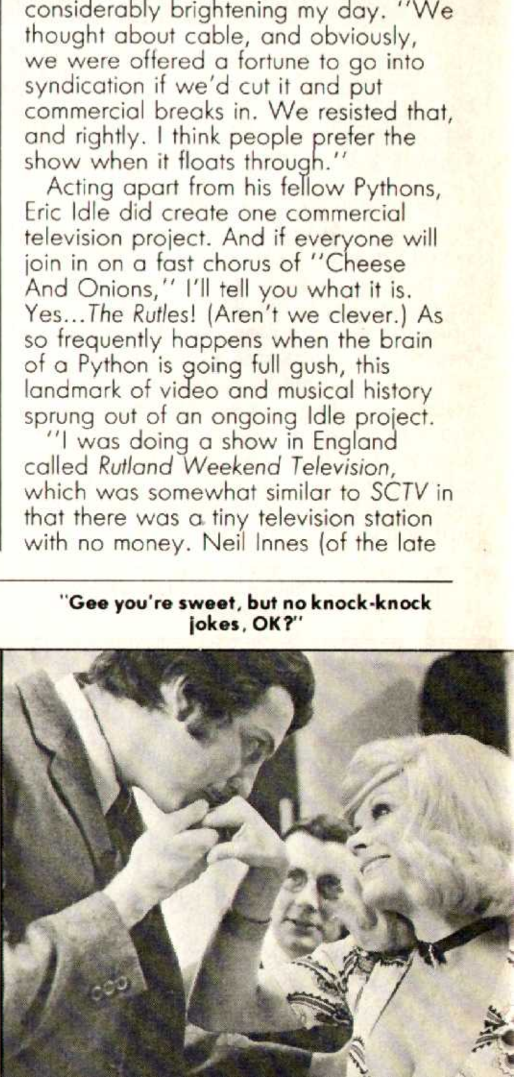
So *that's* the Bucky Fuller globe!



***Proof* that Townshend and Daltrey are reincarnated!**



"Gee you're sweet, but no knock-knock jokes, OK?"



It was a better world when things were just rotten!

The BeeGees never fully regained their dignity.

©1983 Universal City Studios

lamented Bonzo Dog Band) had a very Beatle-y song, and I suddenly thought of the Rutles. I did that interviewer who was walking toward the camera and as a joke, the camera pulls away and he's trying to chase after it. Then we segued into a song, and it was 'A Hard Day's Rut.' They showed that clip on *Saturday Night Live* and the response was terrific.'' Eventually encouraged by Lorne Michaels, Idle placed the show on NBC. Especially ironic, when you consider the plague of ''Beatlemania'' shows lurking on the horizon, *The Rutles* was one parody any rock fan could appreciate. ''There was so much bad and inaccurate stuff being written (about the Beatles), that sometimes, it's easier to write comedy and get closer to the truth of what actually happened.''

Among the show's fans were at least three of the formerly Fab Four. ''George liked it a lot [Harrison subsequently helped produced Terry Gilliam's *Time Bandits.]*. His character did come out quite unblemished,'' Idle grins. ''Lennon and Yoko apparently loved it, and Allen Klein took them over a copy, I think. Ringo said he liked it after '68—I have to find out what I did to him before that... And Paul was always very guarded, until he found out I came from Liverpool—then he was all right. And I was a bit strong on him because I got to play him (as Dirk McQuickly).

''But it was a great story—it had a beginning, a middle and an end. It was about four very successful guys and what happens with fame and wealth. Only when I wrote it, they were alive and well. It would've been harder to deal with after John's death,'' Idle says wistfully.

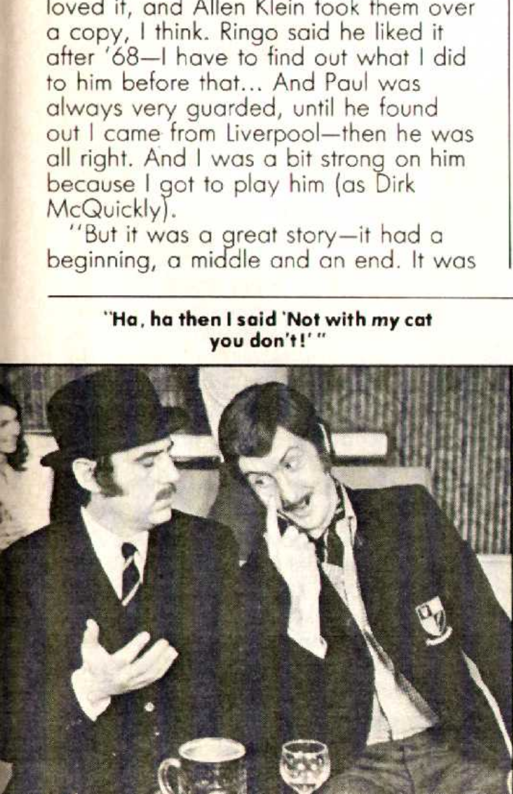
The Rutles was a fairly gentle comedy, and collective Monty Python projects are anything but gentle or subtle. ''Savage'' is a good word to apply here, also ''gross,'' possibly ''offensive'' and definitely ''surreal.'' As Idle quickly points out, there are six different, equally strong egos and sensibilities at work, merging to form a Monty Python program. That makes describing the group's visual philosophy a difficult task for him. ''I would say that the only thing we do half agree on is that we make comedy look realistic, i.e., the background, scenery, costumes and makeup. Then the comedy takes it a step more to realism. Like in *Holy Grail*, *real* shit was thrown on people. It's nice. At least we're out there suffering for other people's laughs, and this is the basis of comedy.''

''I think Python's a blend of optimists and pessimists. Nobody's probably more pessimistic than John Cleese, has a bleaker view of mankind, its role and what it's doing. And Terry Jones tends to see the gross things like the vomit and the gluttony. He's more bowels. Then Michael's more of a sunny personality. And Gilliam tends to revel in the slicing-up and heads popping off and the animation. He likes violence—that's his view of comedy. He's American though,'' says Idle, with a knowing wink. ''I've got the songs—the optimistic cosmic viewpoints.'' In other words, there's something for everyone, and if there is a common point of order, it's that everyone else's sacred cows are Monty Python's hamburger.

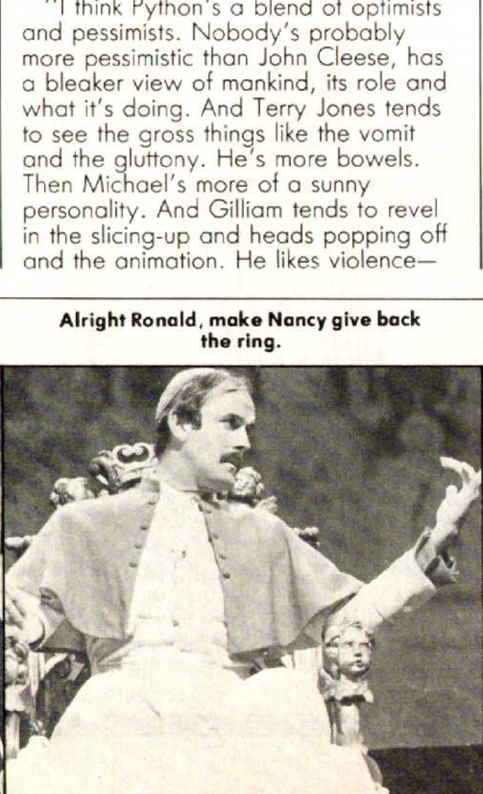
''There are personal biases and then there are these amorphous things like big business and big religion—which are quite similar—which tend to take people's lives or absorb all their energies. Python tends to be drawn into areas that haven't been gone into yet. So in that sense, it's always trying to be innovative, and that, I think, is the good thing about it. We wouldn't do *Grail II* or *Brian III, Brian Meets Rocky.*''

Unable to imagine such a behemoth, I ask Idle, ''Can you think of anything you would hold sacred?'' ''Well, if we could, we'd all be worshipping it!'' he cheerfully replies. ''That would be God, wouldn't it. And there he'd be. A slightly Buddhist view—if God appears, you attack it, and that's the only way you can make sure it's God.'' Somewhat stunned (shocked and stunned) by that final observation, I venture into the sea of traffic clogging Madison Avenue. Now, this is something I can understand—frustration, annoyance, the urge to put a fist through a recalcitrant cabbie's window. I have rejoined the human race, and I bet the fish are laughing themselves sick over it. ■

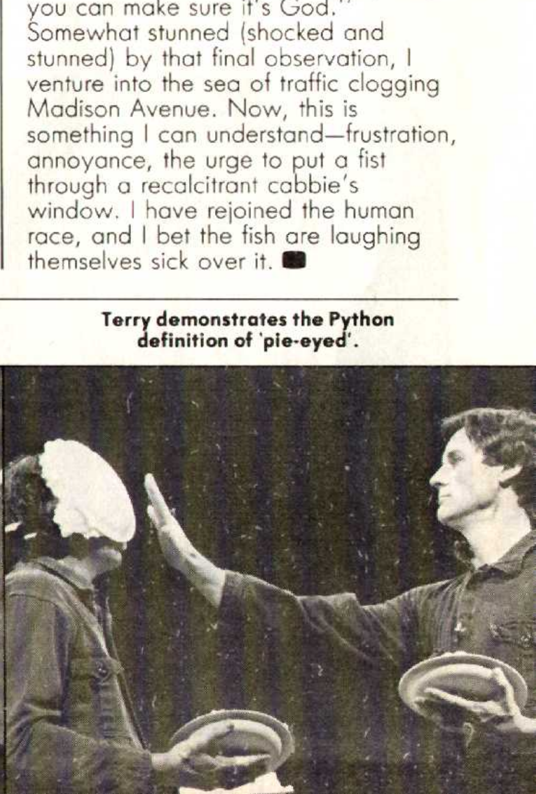
''Ha, ha then I said 'Not with *my* cat you don't!' ''



Alright Ronald, make Nancy give back the ring.

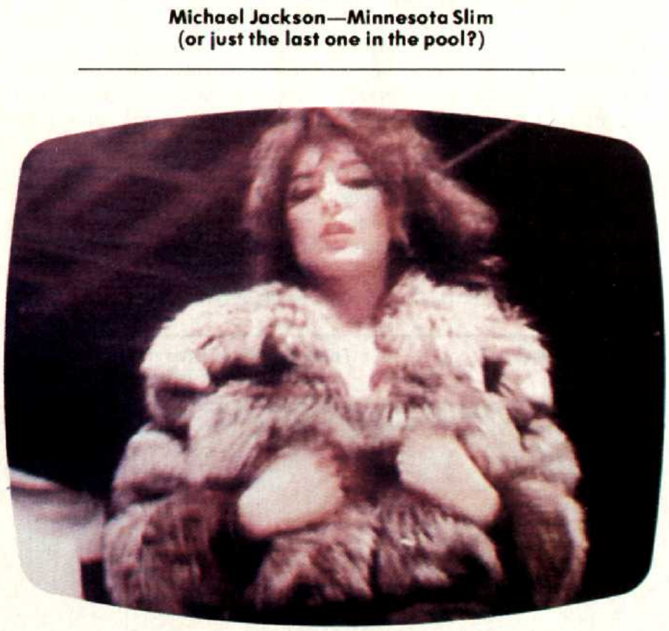


Terry demonstrates the Python definition of 'pie-eyed'.



Mick Jagger—"Have you taken my Geritol?"

Michael Jackson—Minnesota Slim (or just the last one in the pool?)



Duran Duran—Best-dressed Sony 45?.

ROCK VIDIOCY

ROLL AWAY THE STONES

BY DAVE DiMARTINO

It's natural that the first bands to make the transition to video would be rock's biggest. There's that name recognition factor, the built-in audience bands like Fleetwood Mac or ABBA command, that makes such forays potentially more lucrative and less of a risk—and then there's always that plush financial cushion to fall back on, in case of a flop.

Unfortunately, "bigness" these days implies crass commerciality and all that goes with it. And almost to the mark, every feature length rock video has been *boring,* due to the unrelenting overexposure of its subject matter.

Take the Rolling Stones and the Who. Can you really name two bigger bands at the moment? Probably not, and actually, that's part of the problem: they've been hyped to death so many different ways for the past two years, how could you *not* think of them? First there were press conferences, announcing tours. Then there were announcements of the itineraries. Then, ticket sales. Then reports of the "record breaking" ticket sales. Announcements of sponsorships by Jovan and Schlitz. Newsstand magazines, quickie books about the bands. Then the actual concerts themselves, every one superb, not a turkey in the bunch, "entirely professional showmen" the papers blared. Then came those pay-TV broadcasts at tour-end, a final way of sharing the bands' music with the public, a mere 20 bucks a crack or so. And maybe even a new live Stones album.

But of course that wasn't the *end.* First came the Stones Tour movie—Hal Ashby's *Let's Spend The Night Together,* which must've lasted all of two weeks at the theatres, due to an audience finally grossed-out by it all or else just home watching MTV, for free. And now come the videocassettes, Ashby's film (Embassy cassette, $59.95) and *The Who Rocks America/1982 American Tour* (CBS/Fox cassette, $39.98). The merchandising, as they say, is complete. Now somebody just has to buy it all.

I don't know about you, but *I* can't buy one more reminder of how far the Rolling Stones have fallen from grace, let alone the Who. I had a tough enough time convincing myself to bother seeing the Stones in the first place; "it might be the last time," I told myself, just like I'd told myself in 1969 and almost every year they've come since. You'd think I would've gotten the picture: it's *never* the last time with the Rolling Stones, and while I respect their ability to crank it out professionally, I sure as hell don't find myself enjoying it, and I haven't for years.

LSTNT is a concise, well-edited examination of a tour that was *overly* examined, and on that level it's certainly a success. Unfortunately, it reveals little else about the band—except that in the '80s, Mick Jagger says he's got a woman under his thumb instead of a girl. And he's so used to playing stadiums (and stadiums only) that any hint of menace or scowling sexuality is so exaggerated, to reach those folks in the back row, that up close—and that's where Ashby's film brings you—he looks like a grotesque, pathetic little clown.

The tease comes with "Time Is On My Side," in which Ashby inserts clippings from *The Ed Sullivan Show* and other periods of the band's career, including tantalyzingly brief, color footage of Brian Jones. One can't fault Ashby here—his goal, after all, was to document the '81 tour, not to make *The Compleat Rolling Stones*—but those brief clips alone get the point across that, corny as it sounds, what once was is no more and there's no point in trying to bring it back. Which is why I'd rather see the Stones performing "Time Is On My Side," "Satisfaction" and "Jumping Jack Flash" back when they were originally written, in their '60s contexts, or else not see them at all. That the high points of *LSTNT* come when the band plays its most recent songs—"Start Me Up," "Hang Fire" and even "Miss You"—makes that point, and should be enough to make them give up the ghost.

Which is exactly what the Who purported to do with their 1982 American Tour, but talk about weak-kneed fence-straddling: "we...*may*...never tour...*like this*...ever again," they announced to acute non-hysteria and, in some sectors, knowing yawns. Even the back of the videocassette box plays the game: "this is the last concert of The Who's phenomenal North American Tour, and *as the group says*, the end of their touring career...Everyone who has ever loved rock music will hope sincerely that this is not the last opportunity to see the spectacular and volatile Who, but *just in case*, the essence of this all-time great band..." blah, blah, blah. I added the italics, but you get the picture. Guess it'd look pretty stupid in 1986 to file the *1985 Last Concert Tour Ever, Guys, Honest* videocassette next to the one that proclaims they'll *never ever* do it again, they swear.

Frankly, I had more fun watching the Who cassette than Ashby's film. It might be because I simply couldn't manage the energy to see the band in concert last year; the new album reeked, and the bad taste of the Stones Supersell debacle lingered. Unlike *LSTNT*, *The Who Rocks America* presents one show and one show *only*, thus blunders or pacing errors couldn't be snipped out or smoothed over quite so easily. In a way, it's the better document—watching it I felt as if I was *there*, but with one added advantage: I could turn off the TV when I wanted to.

The Who—should they pack it in...or merely *pack it?*

Townshend is predictably miffed when bandmate Daltrey refuses to share his watermelon slice.

David Bowie—his most aboriginal yet?

screen photos by Larry Kaplan

While Daltrey shares few similarities with Jagger, both vocalists are "showmen" who are difficult to read emotionally; they could just as easily be thinking about going to the bathroom as the profundity of the words they sing—I doubt it would show either way. "Hangdog" Pete Townshend is another story, though—the look of sheepishness on his face when the entire Toronto audience sings the words "teenage wasteland" louder than his band does is priceless. Pete always had an eye for irony.

But the real story comes with "Boris The Spider"—while John Entwistle sings his most famous song ("It only took me eight minutes to write" his excuse before singing), Townshend, who sings the backing "creepy, crawly" 's, has the *smuggest* grin on his face, a suggestion of *let's get this kid's stuff over with so we can sing my songs, the serious ones about how life* really *is*. If I were Townshend I'd be singing a lot more "Boris The Spider"'s or "Tattoo"'s and a whole lot less of anything since *Tommy*—because ever since *that* albatross, Townshend simply hasn't been capable of writing wittily, foregoing humor for a profundity mistakenly assigned to him that he even more mistakenly took on as his proud duty.

The best moments of *The Who Rocks America* come when the band sings material from *Face Dances* and *It's Hard*, if only for its relative newness. My wife got to the heart of the matter: "God—am I sick of *this* song," she said during "Pinball

Wizard." And when she called the "Twist And Shout" encore the best thing heard all night, I couldn't agree more. Let's hope this *is* the last Who concert; things probably couldn't get any worse. Someone give Pete Townshend a kick in the butt and tell him to loosen up while he still *can*.

Billy Idol—where *did* he get that hat?

☆ ☆ ☆

Sony might not own the world yet, but it won't be for lack of trying. The company's latest software breakthrough is the "Video 45," three of which have recently hit the marketplace. Whether they'll be successful is questionable at this point—doesn't MTV offer the same services, for free? And though the price of the "45s" *is* reasonable, wouldn't it be cheaper to buy a blank tape and just tape 'em yourself? Sony's Beta Hi-Fi system, however, offers a sound quality that even MTV or your average audio cassette deck doesn't, I'm told—and though I haven't yet heard the system, the sound quality alone might be what'll make the concept work. But only for the Beta format, of course—Sony *does* make their video 45s for the VHS format, understand, but they cost a little more and...heh, heh...don't *sound* as good. VHS manufacturers, meanwhile, insist they're working on a super VHS Hi-Fi system of their own, so we'll have to wait and see.

And whether the Sony Video 45s flop or not won't be determined until the product is a little more appealing, as well. Their first three releases aren't exactly magnificient. Ex-Monkee Mike Nesmith's two songs might as well be seen in their proper context, in the excellent, full length *Elephant Parts* production, also available on videocassette. I've never heard of Jesse Rae and you probably haven't either, so why on earth would you want to buy *his* video single? It's not exactly earthshaking. Best buy would have to be the Duran Duran cassette featuring the "uncensored" "Girls On Film" video not shown on MTV and "Hungry Like The Wolf," shown on MTV at every possible opportunity. Coming up next from Sony are video singles by Todd Rundgren and Utopia and Rolling Stone Bill Wyman, who has never looked like a clown in his life. Whether said videos have already been shown on MTV is unknown, but many other equally interesting ones *have*. And here are a few of the more notable ones:

best

MICHAEL JACKSON: "Beat It"—It's expensive and it looks it, which I guess makes it a great video on one level. But for the life of me, and this never bothered me in *West Side Story*, if *I* was in a gang and everyone I knew started dancing—let alone if someone who looked like Jackson even *showed up*—I'd be too busy laughing to fight. Is it *me*, or what?

DAVID BOWIE: "Let's Dance"—As Bowie videos go it's certainly not his best—"Ashes To Ashes" probably always will be—but it *is* certainly unusual, and a cut above other bands' more pretentious, art-conscious videos. Bowie's utilizing Australia as a contextually "unfamiliar" place works well; there's a weird quality to the landscape, as with most Australian movies, that remains unsettling.

PLANET P: "Why Me?"—Why me *indeed*, thousands ask, and this otherwise schlocky song from a Euro-rock version of the Alan Parsons Project would be justly forgotten were it not for the kitsch value of this great video. Somehow Bowie's "Space Oddity" theme mixes with *The Dunwich Horror* and the results are bizarre indeed. Fun to look at, reminiscent of those creepy Italian horror/science fiction films where the slime quotient is jarringly higher than you're accustomed to.

Planet P—"we would've called ourselves Planet Number One, but this is more fun!"

EDDIE GRANT: "Electric Avenue"—A catchy song and a very colorful video, it's another use of visual repetition (in this instance Grant singing the chorus) reinforcing the melody to provide and enhance the *hook*. Once you've seen the video, you'll never hear the song without thinking of the images the video's director's laid out for you. Good stuff.

BILLY IDOL: "White Wedding"—Took me a while to catch, and even longer to enjoy the song, but I did and I do, and I think that the entire song/video package is strong enough to break Idol massively in the States. If it happens, give the credit—or blame—to MTV.

worst

KENNY LOGGINS: "Swear Your Love"—If video has killed the radio star, what will it do to Kenny Loggins, who, thanks to MTV and his current, fashionably short haircut, is now revealed as being not merely boring but having ears the size of *milk jugs* as well? Wow!

THE FIXX: "Red Skies"—"Stand Or Fall" looked like it'd break this band, but this weak video—a lip-synched live performance with a dinky green light beaming around randomly—may send 'em back to nobodyland faster than anticipated. Disapointing to see a decent video followed with a terrible one.

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN: "The Cutter"—I like the band *and* the song, but this is almost a carbon copy of U2's "New Year's Day" and about equally as compelling, i.e. where's *National Geographic* when we need it? I know these bands place great stakes in looking cool, but hanging around massive chunks of ice isn't exactly the idea.

CHUCK FRANCOUR: "Under The Boulevard Lights"—It's probably just a filler video, but one look at this guy trying to look sincere while mouthing the dumbest lyrics this side of Bertie Higgins really got my goat, especially since he doesn't know what to do with his hands and might indeed be *better off entirely* without them. Bad luck, Chuck.

TRIUMPH: "A World OF Fantasy"—I hate to pick on Triumph, but in their way they pick on us with each of their increasingly idiotic videos. Have they no shame? ■

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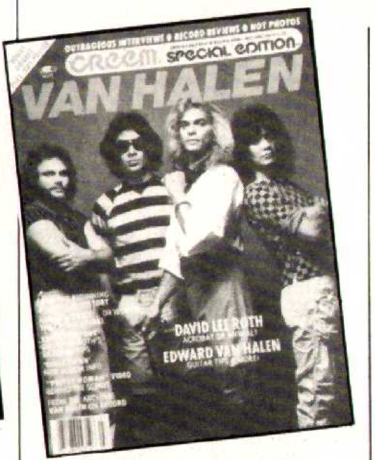
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Captain VIDIOT™

Dear Cap, what's all this guff about stereo TV? TV hasn't even got decent one-speaker sound...so who are they kidding with stereo?

—John O'Brien, Waltham, MA

•While the Cap has to agree with John that TV sound is a complete joke—especially the people over at the networks, although some cable "rock" channels also seem a little weak in the audio dept. too—something is being done about it. Now the fact that *something* is being done about it doesn't mean TV sound is going to get any *better*, but it will be in stereo. Some folks are quipping that with stereo TV, sound will be *twice* as bad! They may be right.

There are already stereo VHS machines, and Sony is bringing stereo sound to Betamax with the new Beta HiFi machine. Cable channels like MTV offer stereo sound (via a special cable feed that decodes through your FM stereo tuner). Toshiba has a new color TV with a dual speaker system (which they say has "real stereo multiplex capability with optional stereo converter after 1983"). There are some video tapes for sale/rental that are in stereo sound.

As to when the pitch for Lemon Fresh Joy and Coke Is It will be in stereo, the answer is: as soon as the networks and the TV set manufacturers think you're ready to throw out your TV set and buy a new one because the new ones sound twice as good.

I want to buy one of these new all electronic typewriters, and when I went to look at them the man at the store said that I could buy all the other parts to turn it into a computer later. What do you think?

—A. Roskins, Bulvar, DE

•Some of the new electric typewriters are indeed designed to become the keyboard/printer components of an expanded home computer system. But there are drawbacks. And if you really want a home computer, you're better off getting an Atari or Commodore than an electronic typewriter. First, because many of the extras that will turn the electronic typer into a computer are still on the drawing board, or will be available "next" year, or haven't really been tried out yet, etc., etc. Second, because these electric typers are designed to *type* first of all, compute second. And so many of the handy functions of the home computer are a little less handy with the electric typer. Third, the price of many of these typers is more than it will cost you to get started with an Atari 800 or Commodore 64 with a printer. And the ones that cost less, do less. So be very wary of any salesman who talks about any electronic typewriter as a "computer system." It really isn't much more than a glorified adding machine that will take wider paper and print the letters of the alphabet.

I heard somewhere that pretty soon there won't be any cable TV at all, but that everybody will be tuned into the satellite direct. When is this going to happen?

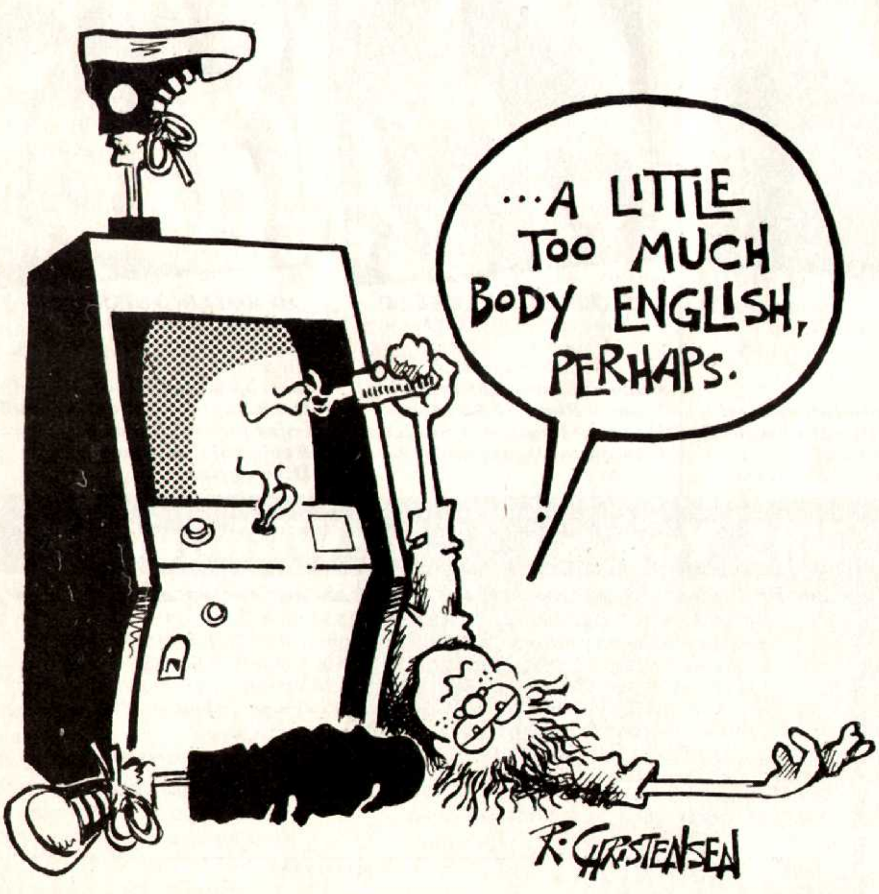
—Jane Whitson, Dover, CT

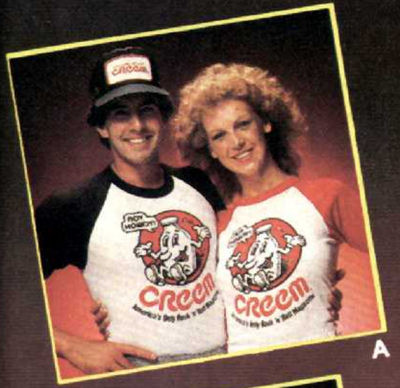
•Direct reception by the viewer from overhead satellite broadcasts is often referred to as "DS" ("direct service"). Right now it is more likely that DS will be used in other parts of the world (Europe first, India, various Third World areas) before it's used in the U.S. The advantage of DS is that large areas can be covered by one satellite, without digging holes in the ground and stringing all that cable house-to-house. The disadvantage is that it's harder to control what TV services to sell the TV customer/viewer, and it will probably cost the customer more to get what the TV services are sold. The customer/viewer will need a special aerial as well, but while it will be more elaborate than the standard TV aerial from Radio Shack, it won't be as big or expensive as the "earth station" dishes some folks have in their backyard now, to pickup satellite transmissions.

This isn't exactly high-tech, but maybe you've got a suggestion. My mom gave me money for my birthday to get a clock radio for my room. I've been to a couple of stores and can't decide which of the radios I've seen is best. Any thought on the matter? (Oh yeah, I want to spend about $35-$40 tops).

—Sal Alberni, Sutter, CA

•Unless you want a clock radio with a built-in telephone or TV or cassette deck, you've got plenty of money in your budget to get a good one. The thing about any of the current line of clock radios is how good they sound when they're being used as radios, since any squawking sound will wake you up. If you only want to have the radio wake you in the morning, and never plan to actually sit and listen to it as a radio, then buy any of the cheapo units


...A LITTLE TOO MUCH BODY ENGLISH, PERHAPS.
R. CHRISTENSEN



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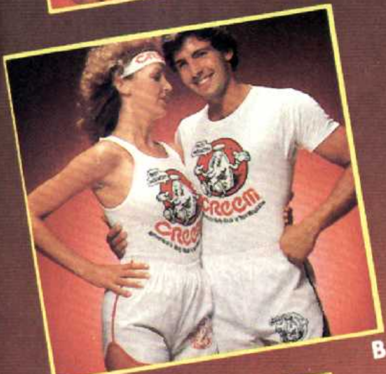

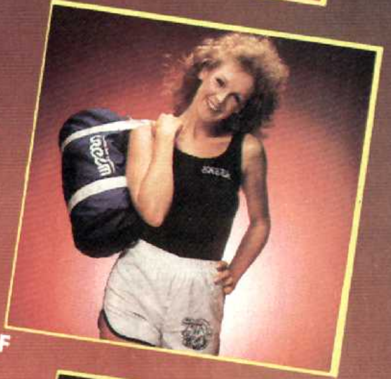

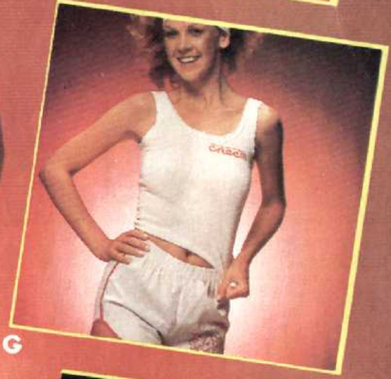

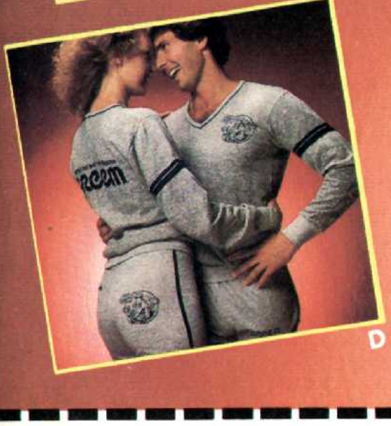

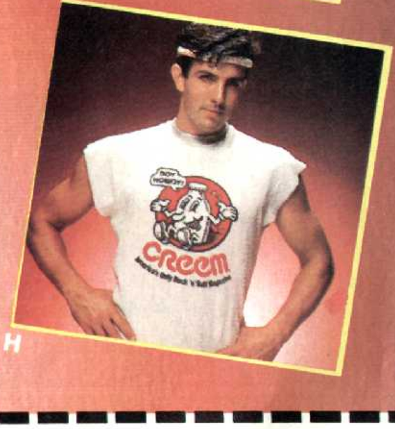

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for $19 or $20 at the discount stores—or better still, go out and buy an electric alarm clock for $6 at a drugstore.

If, on the other hand, you're planning to listen to music on your clock radio, you'll have to pay some attention as to what you're getting. All clock radios these days share common features: digital time display (sometimes with a switch or dial, so the user can adjust the brightness of the green glowing display); controls to turn the radio off after it lulls you to sleep, and to turn on either radio or alarm to wake you up before you really want to get up.

The trick to getting a good clock radio is finding one with a large enough speaker and some sort of tone control so that you get some real depth and definition out of the radio. Usually, the more you pay, the better a speaker system and controls you get. If you look close when you're at the store, you'll be able to see the size of the speaker through the plastic holes—if all else fails, get the biggest diameter speaker, but don't be fooled by the Japanese putting holes around the speaker holes to make the speaker look bigger. Also, buy a brand name (Sony, Panasonic, etc.). It may cost $5 more, but it'll last longer.

What's the difference between "component television" and a regular TV? Keep up the good work, Cap!

—J.G., Milton, KS

•Even though we're used to looking at the TV set as one box full of wires and tubes and transistors, it's actually a box containing several different segments (or components), each of which does a particular task. The subcategories, as it were, of a TV set are: *tuner* (bringing in and selecting the broadcast signal); *display* (the TV tube and associated electronics to show the picture);and *audio* (amplifier and speakers to supply the sound).

Now even though we're used to buying a TV set that contains all these components in the same box, there's no reason why the components can't be separated and sold to use separately in music the same way audio components are sold.

Thus *component television*. Sony, Panasonic, Sanyo, and other manufacturers are establishing lines of TV components to let the consumer assemble a TV system piece by piece. Sony's Profeel line includes a 19" display screen ($650 or so), a tuner (called a "component access tuner" and less than $400 discounted), a speaker system (about $110), a special TV/video rack (about $140). Plus, of course, you can interconnect a video recorder, videodisc player, cable signals, and anything else you might like. You can also skip the hundred dollar speaker system and use a good audio amp and more expensive hi-fi speakers to pump up the sound, or even a TV projecter instead of the 19" screen in a box. And by the time you're finished, you'll have a component system that doesn't include any components from Sony's Profeel line at all—but that's what component TV is all about—mix and match.

How come where I live there's no cable? I want my MTV, Radio 1990, HBO, the works! All I get are laugh tracks from the networks. Sitcoms are sick. I'm going to move some place that has cable if we don't have it by the time I graduate.

—Name & Address Withheld

•Originally cable was installed in places where TV reception was messed up by things being in the way of the TV signal—like mountains or tall buildings. So places like Pennsylvania (where cable started in the 1940s) and New York City got wired for cable well before the rest of the country—and well before even the cable people realized they could make zillions by providing TV programs of their own.

Once it became obvious that cable could run dozens and even tens of dozens of TV channels into every home (and run things *out*, too, which worries the phone company), and that people would pay lots of money not to watch NBC/ABC/CBS/PBS, then the cable business picked up. And as it picked up, local politicians got involved, and wanted a piece of the action, so they could have more limos and free lunches and municipal employees to run your life. So now many localities which *should* have cable, don't—because the local politicians are still fighting over who's going to get what out of it. It may take years before the payoffs and ripoffs are settled and the consumer gets his/her cable TV. If you live in a place like that, and you want your MTV, your best bet is to move.

I'm thinking about buying a video tape recorder and can't decide between a VHS and a Betamax. They both seem pretty much the same to me, although this Beta I, Beta II, & III is kind of confusing. which format should I go with?

—P. Maxxon, Round Ridge, MA

•VHS. The Cap is still smoking about the Beta I he bought at the beginning, thinking the well-known manufacturer whose name begins with an S was going to stick with the consumers who helped get the Beta product off the ground by buying the first ones. But no, instead said company goes on to Beta II and Beta III, and who knows what's next? So the Cap always recommends VHS, because VHS is the same format today as the day it was first introduced, and VHS is here to stay. Also, most reports from the electronic marketplace indicate that VHS is the leader in sales, to which Cap says hooray and such like about there being some justice after all.

Got a headache or just a question about timely technology? Either way, Capt. Vidiot is ready to come to your rescue. Just drop the Capt. a line at Capt. Vidiot, c/o VIDIOT, P.O. Box P-1064, Birmingham, Michigan, 48012, and the Capt.'ll see if there isn't an answer to your problem.

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We always knew you could find vidgames in bars, but who'd suspect you can also find 'em *behind* bars? Certainly not *this* convicted felon, sentenced to five big ones in the slammer for "illegal use of joystick"! Hey—it's no *fun* getting blipped, believe it!

Who sez you have to play videogames in an arcade or the comfort of your own living room? With the video phenomenon sweeping the nation (and probably the universe), there's a whole variety of places you can whomp those little video suckers—on the job, on a boat, *in a tree!!* Where are your favorite places to test your video skills? VIDIOT is interested in seeing them. Send us your photos (to

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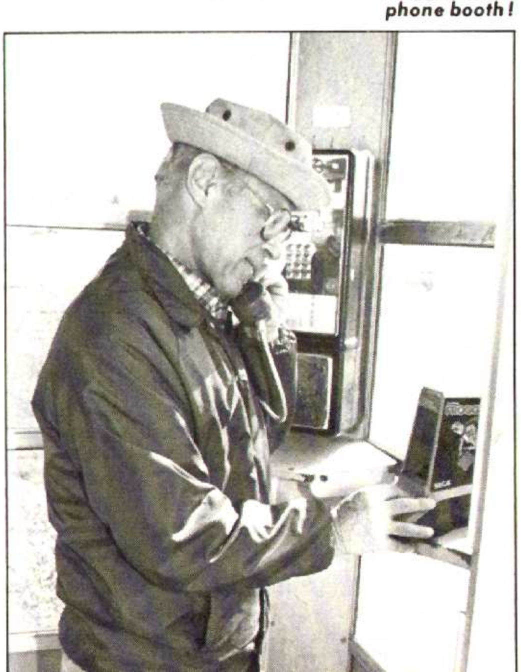
"Hello, Myrna? Listen here, sweetie, you should see what I've got here," coos this old codger, who knows there's more than one way to woo a lady's love—by phone or stick! Tired of spiceless phone calls? Take 'er out to dinner—and then *Frogger in the phone booth!*



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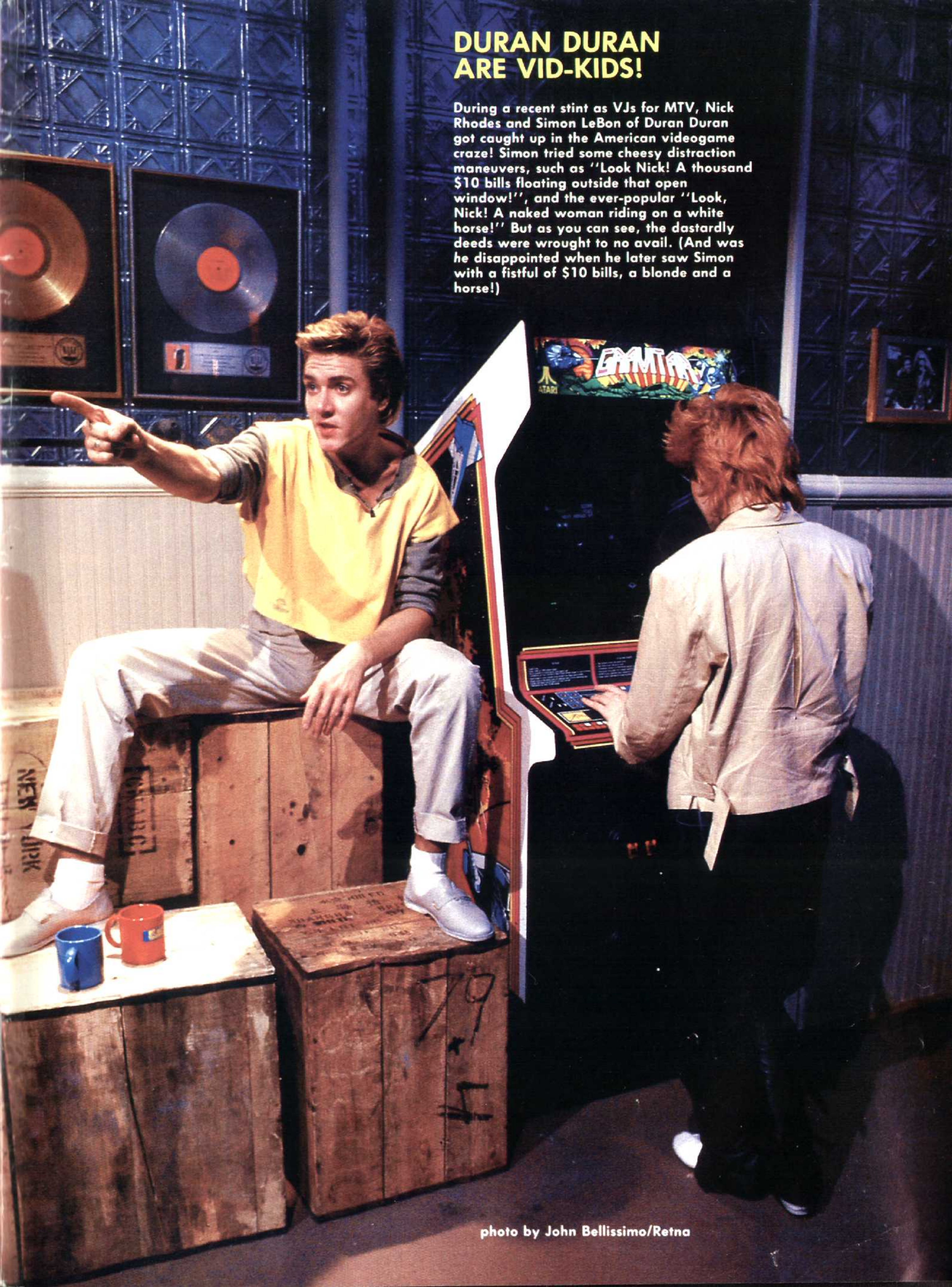
During a recent stint as VJs for MTV, Nick Rhodes and Simon LeBon of Duran Duran got caught up in the American videogame craze! Simon tried some cheesy distraction maneuvers, such as ''Look Nick! A thousand $10 bills floating outside that open window!'', and the ever-popular ''Look, Nick! A naked woman riding on a white horse!'' But as you can see, the dastardly deeds were wrought to no avail. (And was *he* disappointed when he later saw Simon with a fistful of $10 bills, a blonde and a horse!)



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and the time is right for reading on the beach? Take a peek inside for VIDIOT's beachwear tips!

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